"Well Chile, wot You wants ter Say?"

Earth Trembled. Page 338.

The Works of E. P. Roe

VOLUME FIFTEEN

THE EARTH TREMBLED

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CHAPTER I

MARY WALLINGFORD

AT the beginning of the Civil War there was a fine old residence on Meeting Street in Charleston, South Carolina, inhabited by a family almost as old as the State. Its inheritor and owner, Orville Burgoyne, was a widower. He had been much saddened in temperament since the death of the wife, and had withdrawn as far as possible from public affairs. His library and the past had secured a stronger hold upon his interest and his thoughts than anything in the present, with one exception, his idolized and only child, Mary, named for her deceased mother. Any book would be laid aside when she entered; all gloom banished from his eyes when she coaxed and caressed him.

She was in truth one to be loved because so capable of love herself. She conquered and ruled every one not through wilfulness or imperiousness, but by a gentle charm, all her own, which disarmed opposition.

At first Mr. Burgoyne had paid little heed to the mutterings which preceded the Civil War, believing them to be but Chinese thunder, produced by ambitious politicians, North and South. He was preoccupied by the study of an old system of philosophy which he fancied possessed more truth than many a more plausible and modern one. Mary, with some fancy work in her hands, often watched his deep

abstraction in wondering awe, and occasionally questioned him in regard to his thoughts and studies; but as his explanations were almost unintelligible, she settled down to the complacent belief that her father was one of the most learned men in the world.

At last swiftly culminating events aroused Mr. Burgoyne from his abstraction and drove him from his retirement. He accepted what he believed to be duty in profound sorrow and regret. His own early associations and those of his ancestors had been with the old flag and its fortunes; his relations to the political leaders of the South were too slight to produce any share in the alienation and misunderstandings which had been growing between the two great sections of his country, and he certainly had not the slightest sympathy with those who had fomented the ill-will for personal ends. Finally, however, he had found himself face to face with the momentous certainty of a separation of his State from the Union. For a time he was bewildered and disturbed beyond measure; for he was not a prompt man of affairs, living keenly in the present, but one who had been suddenly and rudely summoned from the academic groves of the old philosophers to meet the burning imperative questions of the day—questions put with the passionate earnestness of a people excited beyond measure.

It was this very element of popular feeling which finally turned the scale in his decision. Apparently the entire Southern people were unanimous in their determination "to be free" and to separate themselves from their old political relations. His pastor with all other friends of his own rank confirmed this impression, and, as it was known that he wavered, the best and strongest men of his acquaintance argued the question with him. His daughter was early carried away by the enthusiasm of her young companions, nevertheless she watched the conflict in her father's mind with the deepest interest. She often saw him walk the floor with unwonted tears in his eyes and almost agony on his brow; and when at last, he decided in accordance with the

prevailing sentiment of his State, the Act of Secession and all that it involved became sacred in her thoughts.

She trembled and shrank when the phase of negotiation passed away, and war was seen to be the one alternative to submission. She never doubted or hesitated, however; neither did her father after his mind was once made up. Every day the torrent of bitter feeling deepened and broadened between them and the North, of which, practically, they knew very little. Even such knowledge as they possessed had come through distorted mediums, and now everything was colored by the blackest prejudice. They were led to believe and made to feel that not only their possessions but their life and honor were at stake. In early years Mr. Burgoyne had served with distinction in the war with Mexico, and he therefore promptly received a commission.

The effect of her father's decision and action had been deepened a hundred-fold by an event which occurred soon afterward. Among the thousands who thronged to Charleston when Fort Sumter was attacked, was the son of a wealthy planter residing in the interior of the State. This young soldier's enthusiasm and devotion were much bruited in the city, because, waiving wealth and rank, he had served as a private. His fearlessness at Fort Moultrie enhanced his reputation, and when the small garrison of heroes, commanded by Major Anderson, succumbed, Sidney Wallingford found that he had been voted a hero himself, especially by his fair compatriots with whom he had formerly danced when visiting the town.

The young fellow's head was not easily turned, however, for when, at an evening gathering, a group was lauding the great achievement he said disdainfully, "What! thousands against seventy? Despise the Yankees as we may, the odds were too great. The only thing we can plume ourselves upon is that we would have fought just the same had the seventy been seven thousand. I think the fellows did splendidly, if they were Yankees, yet what else could we expect since their commander was a Southern man? Oh

no! we must wait till the conditions are more even before we can exult over our victories. I reckon we'll have them all the same though."

Murmurs of approbation followed these remarks, but he saw only the eloquent eyes of Mary Burgoyne, and, offering her his arm, led her away.

The spring night was as warm as a June evening at the North, and they joined the groups that were strolling under the moonlight in the garden.

Sidney felt the young girl's hand tremble on his arm, and he drew it closer to his side. She soon asked falteringly, "Mr. Wallingford, do you think—will the conditions become more even, as you suggested? Can it be that the North will be so carried away by this abolition fanaticism as to send armies and ships in the vain effort to subjugate us?"

"Thank you, Miss Mary, for saying that it will be a 'vain effort.' "

"Of course it will be, with such men as my father and" —she suddenly hesitated.

"And who else?" he gently asked, trying to look into her averted face.

"Oh—well," she stammered with a forced little laugh, "thousands of brave fellows like you. You do not answer my question. Are we to have anything like a general war? Surely, there ought to be enough good, wise men on both sides to settle the matter."

"The matter might be settled easily enough," he replied lightly. "We know our rights, and shall firmly assert them. If the Yankees yield, all well; if not, we'll make 'em."

"But making them may mean a great war?"

"Oh, yes, some serious scrimmages I reckon. We're prepared however, and will soon bring the North to its senses."

"If anything should happen to my father!" she sighed.

He had led her beneath the shadow of a palmetto, and now breathed into her ear, "Mary, dear Mary, how much

I'd give to hear you say in the same tone, 'If anything should happen to Sidney'!" She did not withdraw her hand from his arm, and he again felt it tremble more than before. "Mary," he continued earnestly, "I have asked your father if I might speak to you, and he did not deny me the privilege. Oh, Mary, you must have seen my love in my eyes and heard it in my tones long since. Mary," he concluded impetuously, "let me but feel that I am defending you as well as my State, and I can and will be a soldier in very truth."

She suddenly turned and sobbed on his shoulder, "That's what I fear,—I can hide my secret from you no longer—that's what I fear. Those I love will be exposed to sudden and terrible death. I am not brave at all."

"Shall I go home and plant cotton?" he asked, half jestingly.

"No, no, a thousand times no," she cried passionately. "Have I not seen the deep solemnity with which my father accepted duty so foreign to his tastes and habits? Can you think I would wish you to shrink or fail—you who are so strong and brave? No, no, in very truth. Self must mean only self-sacrifice until our sacred cause is won. Yet think twice, Sidney, before you bind yourself to me. I fear I am not so brave as other women appear to be in these times. My heart shrinks unspeakably from war and bloodshed. Although I shall not falter, I shall suffer agonies of dread. I cannot let you go to danger with stern words and dry eyes. I fear you'll find me too weak to be a soldier's wife."

He led her into deeper and shadier seclusion as he asked, "Do you think I'll hesitate because you have a heart in your bosom instead of a stone? No, my darling. We must keep a brave aspect to the world, but my heart is as tender toward you as yours toward me. What else in God's universe could I dread more than harm to you? But there is little cause to fear. The whole South will soon be with us, foreign nations will recognize us as an independent people, and then we will dictate our own terms of peace;

then you shall be my bride in this, our proud city by the sea."

He kissed away her tears, and they strolled through the shadowy walks until each had regained the composure essential in the bright drawing-rooms.

A commission with the rank of captain was speedily offered young Wallingford. He accepted it, but said he would return home and raise his own company. This action was also applauded by his friends and the authorities. Mary saw her father smile approvingly and proudly upon her choice, and he became her ideal hero as well as lover.

He fulfilled his promises, and before many weeks passed, re-entered Charleston with a hundred brave fellows, devoted to him. The company was incorporated into one of the many regiments forming, and Mr. Burgoyne assured his daughter that the young captain was sure of promotion, and would certainly make a thorough soldier.

Even in those early and lurid days a few things were growing clear, and among them was the fact that the North would not recognize the doctrine of State Rights, nor peaceably accept the Act of Secession. Soldiers would be needed,—how long no one knew, for the supreme question of the day had passed from the hands of statesmen to those of the soldier. The lack of mutual knowledge, the misapprehension and the gross prejudices existing between the two sections, would have been ludicrous had they not been fraught with such long-continued woes. Southern papers published such stuff as this: "The Northern soldiers are men who prefer enlisting to starvation; scurvy fellows from the back slums of cities, with whom Falstaff would not have marched through Coventry. Let them come South, and we will put our negroes at the dirty work of killing them. But they will not come South. Not a wretch of them will live on this side of the border longer than it will take us to reach the ground and drive them off." The Northern press responded in kind: "No man of sense," it was declared, "could for a moment doubt that this much-

ado-about-nothing would end in a month. The Northern people are simply invincible. The rebels, a mere band of ragamuffins, will fly like chaff before the wind on our approach." Thus the wretched farces of bluster continued on either side until in blood, agony, and heartbreak, Americans learned to know Americans.

President Lincoln, however, had called out seventy-five thousand troops, and these men were not long in learning that they could not walk over the South in three months. The South also discovered that these same men could not be terrified into abandoning the attempt. There were thoughtful men on both sides who early began to recognize the magnitude of the struggle upon which they had entered. Among these was Major Burgoyne, and the presentiment grew upon him that he would not see the end of the conflict. When, therefore, impetuous young Wallingford urged that he might call Mary his wife before he marched to distant battlefields, the father yielded, feeling that it might be well for her to have another protector besides himself. The union was solemnized in old St. Michael's Church, where Mary's mother and grandmother had been married before her; a day or two of quiet and happiness was vouchsafed, and then came the tidings of the first great battle of the war. Charleston responded with acclamations of triumph; bells sent out their merriest peals; cannon thundered from every fort on the harbor, but Mary wept on her husband's breast. Among the telegrams of victory had come an order for his regiment to go North immediately. Not even a brief honeymoon was permitted to her.

CHAPTER II

LOVE'S AGONY

AS the exaggerated reports of a magnificent Confederate victory at Bull Run continued to pour in, Major Burgoyne shared for a time in the general elation, believing that independence, recognition abroad, and peace had been virtually secured. All the rant about Northern cowardice appeared to be confirmed, and he eagerly waited for the announcement that Washington had been captured by Johnston's victorious army.

Instead, came the dismal tidings from his only sister that her husband, Captain Hunter, had been killed in the battle over which he had been rejoicing. Then for some mysterious reason the Southern army did not follow the Federals, who had left the field in such utter rout and panic. It soon appeared that the contending forces were occupying much the same positions as before. News of the second great uprising of the North followed closely, and presaged anything but a speedy termination of the conflict. Major Burgoyne was not a Hotspur, and he grew thoughtful and depressed in spirit, although he sedulously concealed the fact from his associates. The shadow of coming events began to fall upon him, and his daughter gradually divined his lack of hopefulness. The days were already sad and full of anxiety, for her husband was absent. He had scouted the idea of the Yankees standing up before the impetuous onset of the Southern soldiers, and his words had apparently proved true, yet even those Northern cowards had killed one closely allied to her before they fled. Remembering,

therefore, her husband's headlong courage, what assurance of his safety could she have although victory followed victory?

Major Burgoyne urged his widowed sister to leave her plantation in the charge of an overseer and make her home with him. "You are too near the probable theatre of military operations to be safe," he wrote, "and my mind cannot rest till you are with us in this city which we are rapidly making impregnable." The result was that she eventually became a member of his family. Her stern, sad face added to the young wife's depression, for the stricken woman had been rendered intensely bitter by her loss. Mary was too gentle in nature to hate readily, yet wrathful gleams would be emitted at times even from her blue eyes, as her aunt inveighed in her hard monotone against the "monstrous wrong of the North." They saw their side with such downright sincerity and vividness that the offenders appeared to be beyond the pale of humanity. Few men, even though the frosts of many winters had cooled their blood and ripened their judgment, could reason dispassionately in those days, much less women, whose hearts were kept on the rack of torture by the loss of dear ones or the dread of such loss.

It is my purpose to dwell upon the war, its harrowing scenes and intense animosities, only so far as may be essential to account for my characters and to explain subsequent events. The roots of personality strike deep, and the taproot, heredity, runs back into the being of those who lived and suffered before we were born.

Gentle Mary Burgoyne should have been part of a happier day and generation. The bright hopes of a speedily conquered peace were dying away; the foolish bluster on both sides at the beginning of the war had ceased, and the truth so absurdly ignored at first, that Americans, North and South, would fight with equal courage, was made clearer by every battle. The heavy blows received by the South, however, did not change her views as to the wisdom and righteousness of her cause, and she continued to return blows at which

the armies of the North reeled, stunned and bleeding. Mary was not permitted to exult very long, however, for the terrible pressure was quickly renewed with an unwavering pertinacity which created misgivings in the stoutest hearts. The Federals had made a strong lodgment on the coast of her own State, and were creeping nearer and nearer, often repulsed yet still advancing as if impelled by the remorseless principle of fate.

At last, in the afternoon of a day early in April, events occurred never to be forgotten by those who witnessed them. Admiral Dupont with his armored ships attempted to reduce Fort Sumter and capture the city. Thousands of spectators watched the awful conflict; Mary Wallingford and her aunt, Mrs. Hunter, among them. The combined roar of the guns exceeded all the thunder they had ever heard. About three hundred Confederate cannon were concentrated on the turreted monitors, and some of the commanders said that "shot struck the vessels as fast as the ticking of a watch." It would seem that the ships which appeared so diminutive in the distance must be annihilated, yet Mary with her powerful glass saw them creep nearer and nearer. It was their shots, not those of her friends, that she watched with agonized absorption, for every tremendous bolt was directed against the fort in which was her father.

The conflict was too unequal; the bottom of the harbor was known to be paved with torpedoes, and in less than an hour Dupont withdrew his squadron in order to save it from destruction.

In strong reaction from intense excitement, Mary's knees gave way, and she sank upon them in thankfulness to God. Her aunt supported her to her room, gave restoratives, and the daughter in deep anxiety waited for tidings from her father. He did not come to her; he was brought, and there settled down upon her young life a night of grief and horror which no words can describe. While he was sighting a gun, it had been struck by a shell from the fleet, and when the smoke of the explosion cleared away he was seen among

the debris, a mangled and unconscious form. He was tenderly taken up, and after the conflict ended, conveyed to his home. On the way thither he partially revived, but reason was gone. His eyes were scorched and blinded, his hearing destroyed by the concussion, and but one lingering thought survived in the wreck of his mind. In a plaintive and almost childlike tone he continually uttered the words, "I was only trying to defend my city and my home."

Hour after hour he repeated this sentence, deaf to his child's entreaties for recognition and a farewell word. His voice grew more and more feeble until he could only whisper the sad refrain; at last his lips moved but there was no sound; then he was still.

For a time it seemed as if Mary would soon follow him, but her aunt, her white face tearless and stern, bade her live for her husband and her unborn child. These sacred motives eventually enabled her to rally, but her heart now centred its love on her husband with an intensity which made her friends tremble for her future. His visits had been few and brief, and she lived upon his letters. When they were delayed, her eyes had a hunted, agonized look which even her stoical aunt could not endure.

One day about midsummer she found the stricken wife, unconscious upon the floor with the daily paper in her clenched hand. When at last the physician had brought back feeble consciousness and again banished it by the essential opiate, Mrs. Hunter read the paragraph which, like a bolt, had struck down her niece. It was from an account of a battle in which the Confederates had been worsted and were being driven from a certain vantage point. "At this critical moment," ran the report, "Colonel Wallingford, with his thinned regiment, burst through the crowd of fugitives rushing down the road, and struck the pursuing enemy such a stinging blow as to check its advance. If the heroic colonel and his little band could only have been supported at this instant the position might have been regained. As it was, they were simply overwhelmed as a slight obstacle is

swept away by a torrent. But few escaped; some were captured, while the colonel and the majority were struck down, trampled upon and fairly obliterated as the Northern horde of infantry and artillery swept forward all the more impetuously. The check was of very great advantage, however, for it gave our vastly outnumbered troops more time to rally in a stronger position."

This brief paragraph contained the substance of all that was ever learned of the young husband, and his mangled remains filled an unknown grave. His wife had received the blow direct, and she never rallied. Week after week she moaned and wept upon her bed when the physician permitted consciousness. Even in the deep sleep produced by opiates, she would shudder at the sound of Gilmore's guns as they thundered against Forts Sumter and Wagner. A faithful colored woman who had been a slave in the family from infancy watched unweariedly beside her, giving place only to the stern-visaged aunt, whose touch and words were gentle, but who had lost the power to disguise the bitterness of her heart. She tried to awaken maternal instincts in the wife, but in vain, for there are wounds of the spirit, like those of the body, which are fatal. All efforts to induce the widow to leave the city, already within reach of the Federal guns, were unavailing, and she was the more readily permitted to have her own way, because, in the physician's opinion, the attempt would prove fatal.

Meanwhile her time was drawing near. One August night she was dozing, and moaning in her sleep, when suddenly there was a strange, demoniac shriek through the air followed by an explosion which in the still night was terrifically loud. The invalid started up and looked wildly at her sable nurse, who was trembling like a leaf.

"O Lawd hab mercy, Missus," she exclaimed. "Dem Yankees shellin' de town."

Mrs. Hunter was instantly at the bedside. The faithful doctor came hurriedly of his own accord, and employed all his skill.

A few hours later Mrs. Hunter tried to say cheerily, "Come, Mary, here is a fine little girl for you to love and live for."

"Aunty," said the mother calmly, "I am dying. Let me see my child and kiss her. Then put her next my heart till it is cold."

Mrs. Hunter lifted her startled eyes to the physician, who sadly nodded his head in acquiescence. In a few moments more the broken heart found healing far beyond all human passion and strife.

With hot, yet tearless eyes, and a face that appeared to be chiselled from marble in its whiteness and rigidity, the aunt took up the child. Her tone revealed the indescribable intensity of her feelings as she said, "Thy name is Mara—bitterness."

CHAPTER III

UNCLE SHEBA'S EXPERIENCE

MANY years have elapsed since the events narrated in the last chapter occurred, and the thread of story is taken up again in the winter of 1886. In a small dwelling, scarcely more than a cabin, and facing on an obscure alley in Charleston, a rotund colored woman of uncertain age is sitting by the fire with her husband. She is a well-known character in the city, for she earns her bread by selling cakes, fruits, and other light articles which may be vended in the street with chances of profit. Although "Aun' Sheba," as she was familiarly called, had received no training for mercantile pursuits, yet her native shrewdness had enabled her to hit upon the principles of success, as may be discovered by the reader as the story progresses. She had always been so emphatically the master of the house and the head of the family, that her husband went by the name of "Uncle Sheba." It must be admitted that the wife shared in the popular opinion of her husband.

When in an amiable mood, which, happily, was her usual condition of mind, she addressed him as "Unc.;" when some of his many short-comings exhausted her good-nature—for Aun' Sheba had more good-nature than patience—he was severely characterized as "Mr. Buggone." Since they had been brought up in Major Burgoyne's family, they felt entitled to his surname, and by evolution it had become "Buggone." Uncle Sheba's heart failed him when his wife addressed him by this title, for he knew he

was beyond the dead line of safety. They dwelt alone in the cabin, their several children, with one exception, having been scattered they knew not where. Adjacent was another cabin, owned by a son-in-law, named Kern Watson, who had married their youngest daughter years before, and he was the pride of Aun' Sheba's heart. Uncle Sheba felt that he was not appreciated, or perhaps appreciated too well, by his son-in-law, and their intercourse was rather formal.

On the evening in question, supper was over, but the table had not yet been cleared. Uncle Sheba was a good deal of an epicure, and, having left not a scrap of what his wife had vouchsafed to him, was now enjoying his corn-cob pipe. Aun' Sheba also liked a good square meal as much as any one, and she had the additional satisfaction that she had earned it. At this hour of the day she was usually very tired, and was accustomed to take an hour's rest before putting her living-room in order for the night. Although the twilight often fell before she returned from her mercantile pursuits, she never intrusted Uncle Sheba with the task of getting supper, and no housekeeper in the city kept her provisions under lock and key more rigorously than did Aun' Sheba. After repeated trials, she had come to a decision. "Mr. Buggone," she had said in her sternest tones, "you's wuss dan poah white trash when you gets a chance at de cubbard. Sence I can't trus' you nohow, I'se gwine to gib you a 'lowance. You a high ole Crischun, askin' for you'se daily bread, an' den eatin' up 'nuff fer a week."

Uncle Sheba often complained that he was "skimped," but his appearance did not indicate any meagreness in his "'lowance," and he had accepted his lot in this instance, as in others, rather than lose the complacent consciousness that he was provided for without much effort on his part.

Supper was Aun' Sheba's principal meal, and she practically dined at the fashionable hour of six. What she termed her dinner was a very uncertain affair. Sometimes she swallowed it hastily at "Ole Tobe's rasteran," as she

termed the eating-room kept by a white-woolled negro; again she would "happen in" on a church sister, when, in passing, the odor of some cookery was appetizing. She always left, however, some compensation from her basket, and so was not unwelcome. Not seldom, also, a lady or a citizen who knew her well and the family to which she had once belonged, would tell her to go to the kitchen. On such days Aun' Sheba's appetite flagged at supper, a fact over which her husband secretly rejoiced, since his allowance was almost double.

She was now resting after the fatigues of the day, and the effort to get and dispose of a very substantial supper, and was puffing at her pipe in a meditative aspect. Evidently something unusual was on her mind, and she at last ejaculated, "I know dey'se poah."

"Who's?" languidly queried Uncle Sheba.

"Oh, you'd neber fin' out. Dey'd starve long o' you."

"I dunno who dey is. What 'casion I got to pervide for dey?"

"Ha, ha, ha, Unc.! You'se a great pervider. Somehow or oder I'se got de notion dat you'se a 'sumer."

"I bress de Lawd my appetite ain' failin' in spite ob de rheumatiz."

"If you rheumatiz was only in you jints, dere'd be a comfort in keerin' fer you, Unc., but it's in you min'."

"You'll cotch it some day, an' den you know what 'tis. But who's dey dat you got on you min'?"

"Why, de young Missy and de ole Missus to be sho'."

"I don't see how dey can be poah. Dey mus' hab kep' someting out all dey had."

"So dey did, but it wan't much, an' I jus' b'lebe it's clar dun gone!"

"What! de plantation in Virginny all gone?"

"How often I tole you, Unc., dat I heard ole Missus say herself dat plantation was all trompl'd in de groun' an' what was lef' was took fer taxes."

"I forgits," remarked Uncle Sheba, his eyes growing

heavy in his lack of interest; "but ole Marse Wallingford mus' hab lef' de widder ob his son someting."

"Now look heah, Unc., you'se haf asleep. You'se 'lowance too hebby dis ebenin'. How you forgit when I tell you ober an' ober? You doan keer. Dat's de foot de shoe's on. You know ole Marse Wallingford's plantation was trompl'd in de groun' too—not a stick or stone lef' by Sherman's sogers."

"Well, dey sole dere fine house on Meetin' Street, an' dat mus' a brought a heap," protested Uncle Sheba, rousing himself a little.

"Mighty little arter de mor'giges an' taxes was paid. Didn't I help dem pack up what dey tink dey could sabe, and see poah Missy Mara wrung her han's as she gib up dis ting an' dat ting till at las' she cry right out, 'Mought as well gib up eberyting. Why don't dey kill us too, like dey did all our folks?' You used to be so hot fer dat ole Guv'ner Moses and say he was like de Moses in de Bible—dat he was raised up fer ter lead de culled people to de promise' lan'. You vote fer him, an' hurrah fer him, an' whar's yer promise' lan'? Little you know 'bout Scripter when you say he secon' Moses. Don' want no more sich Moseses in dis town. Dey wouldn't lebe a brick heah ef dey could take dem off. He'n his tribe got away wid 'bout all ole Missus' and young Missus' prop'ty in my 'pinion. Anyhow I feels it in my bones dey's poah, an' I mus' try an' fin' out. Dey's so proud dey'd starbe fore dey'd let on."

"'Spose you does fin' out, what kin you do? You gwine ter buy back de big house fer dem?"

"I'se not de one ter talk big 'bout what I'se gwine ter do," replied Aun' Sheba, nodding her head portentously as she knocked the ashes from her pipe and prepared for the remaining tasks of the evening.

Her husband's self-interest took alarm at once, and he began to hitch uneasily on his chair. At last he broke out: "Now look heah, Aun' Sheba, you'se got suffin on you' min' 'bout dem white folks—"

"Dem white folks! Who you talkin' 'bout?"

"Well, dey ain't none o' our flesh an' blood, and de Bible say shuah dat dey dat don' pervide fer dere own flesh an' blood am wuss dan a inferdel."

"Den I reckon you'se an inferdel, Mister Buggone," retorted Aun' Sheba, severely.

"I'se not," retorted her husband, assuming much solemnity, "I'se a 'umble an' 'flicted sarbent ob de Lawd, an' it's my duty to 'monstrate wid you. I know what's on you' min'. You'se gwine ter do fer dem white folks when you got all you kin do now."

"Mister Buggone, don' you call Miss Mara white folks no mo'."

"Well, ain't she white folks? Didn't I slabe fer her granpar yeahs an' yeahs, an' wat I got ter show fer 't?"

"You got no stripes on you back, an' you'd had plenty ter show ef you'd wuked fer any oder man. I 'member all about you slabin' an' how de good major use' to let you off. You know, too, dat he war so took up wid his book dat you could do foolishness right under his nose. An' dar was my poah young Missy Mary, who hadn't de heart to hurt a skeeter. You s'pose I watch ober dat broken-hearted lam' an' her little chile an' den heah 'em called white folks, as if dey'se no 'count ter me? How ofen dat poah dyin' lam' turn to me in de middle ob de night an' say ter me, Sheba, you will took keer on my chile ef it libe, an' I say to her 'fore de Lawd dat I would. An' I did too. Dat po' little moderless and faderless chile lay on my bosom till I lubed it fer hersef, and Missy Mara neber gwine to hab trubble when I ain't dar."

Aun' Sheba's voice had been reaching a higher and higher key under the influence of reminiscence and indignation. Although her husband was in dire trepidation he felt that this point was too serious to be yielded without a desperate effort. He had been put on short allowance once before when his wife had gone to help take care of Mara in a severe illness, and now he had a presentiment that Aun'

Sheba would try to help support the girl and her great-aunt as well as himself. Such an attempt threatened privations which were harrowing even to contemplate, and in a sort of desperation he resolved once more to assert his marital position. "'Aun' Sheba," he began with much dignity, "I'se been bery easy an' bendin' like ter you. I'se gib you you'se own head dead agin de principles ob Scripter which say dat de husban' am de head ob de wife—"

"Mister Buggone," interrupted Aun' Sheba in a passion which was bursting all restraint, "you'se wrestin' Scripter to you'se own 'struction. Ef you am de head ob dis fam'ly, I'se gwine ter sit down an fole my hans, an you can jes' git out an earn my libin' an' yours too. Git up dar now, an' bring in de wood an' de kinlin' fer de mawnin', an' when mawnin' come, you make de fiah. Arter breakfas' you start right off ter work, and I'se sit on de do' step and talk to de neighbos. You shall hab all de headin ob de house you wants, but you can't hab de 'sition widout de 'sponsibilities. I'se gwine now to take a res' an' be 'sported," and the irate wife filled her pipe, sat down and smoked furiously.

Uncle Sheba was appalled at the result of his Scriptural argument. He would like to be king by divine right without any responsibilities. His one thought now was to escape until the storm blew over and his wife's tolerant good-nature resumed its wonted sway. Shuffling cautiously around to the door he remarked meekly as he held it ajar, "I reckon I'll drap in at de prar-meetin', fer I tole brudder Simpkins I'd gib dem a lif' dis ebenin'."

His heart misgave him as he heard his wife bound up and bolt the door after him, but he was a philosopher who knew the value of time in remedying many of the ills of life. It must be admitted that he could not get into the spirit of the meeting, and Brother Simpkins remarked rather severely at its close, "Mister Buggone, I'se feared you'se zeal am languishin'."

Uncle Sheba's forebodings increased as he saw that his house was dark, and he fell into something like panic when he found that the door was still bolted. He knocked gently at first, then louder and louder, adding to the uproar by calls and expostulations. A light appeared in the adjacent cottage, and Kern Watson, his son-in-law, came out. "Wat de matter now, Uncle Sheba?" he asked. "Does yer wan' ter bring de perlice? You'se been takin' a drap too much again, I reckon."

"No, I'se only been to prar-meetin', and Aun' Sheba jes' dun gone and bolt me out."

"Well, you'se been cuttin' up some shine, an' dat's a fac'. Come in an' stop you noise. You can sleep on de lounge. We don' want to pay ten dollahs in de mawnin to get you out ob de caboose."

Uncle Sheba was glad to avail himself of this rather equivocal hospitality, and eagerly sought to win Kern's sympathy by relating his grievance. His son-in-law leaned against the chimney-side that he might, in his half-dressed condition, enjoy the warmth of the coals covered with ashes on the hearth, and listened. He was a tall, straight negro of powerful build, and although his features were African, they were not gross in character. The candle on the mantel near him brought out his profile in fine silhouette, while his quiet steady eyes indicated a nature not stirred by trifles.

"You'se a 'publican, Kern, an' you knows dat we culled people got ter take keer ob ourselves."

"Yes, I'se a Republican," said Kern, "but wat dat got ter do wid dis matter? Is Aun' Sheba gwine ter take any ob your money? Ef she set her heart on helpin' her ole Missus an' young Missy an' arn de money herself, whose business is it but hers? I'se a Republican because I belebe in people bein' free, wedder dey is white or black, but I ain't one ob dem kin' ob Republicans dat look on white folks as inemies. Wot we do widout dem, an' wat dey do widout us? All talk ob one side agin de toder is fool talk. Ef dere's any prosperity in dis lan' we got ter pull tergedder. You'se

free, Uncle Sheba, an' dere ain't a man in Charleston dat kin hender you from goin' to work termorrow."

"I reckon I'se try ter git a wink ob slepe, Kern," responded Uncle Sheba plaintively. "My narbes been so shook up dat my rheumatiz will be po'ful bad for a spell."

Kern knew the futility of further words, and also betook himself to rest.

With Aun' Sheba, policy had taken the place of passion. Through a knot-hole in her cabin she had seen her husband admitted to her son-in-law's dwelling, and so her mind was at rest. "Unc," she muttered, "forgits his 'sper'ence at de prar-meetin's bery easy, but he mus' have a 'sper'ence to-night dat he won't forgit. I neber so riled in my bawn days. Ef he tinks I can sit heah and see him go'mandizin' when my honey lam' Mara hungry, he'll fin' out."

Before the dawn on the following day, Uncle Sheba had had time for many second thoughts, and when his wife opened the door he brought in plenty of kindlings and wood. Aun' Sheba accepted these marks of submission in grim silence, resolving that peace and serenity should come about gradually. She relented so far, however, as to give him an extra slice of bacon for breakfast, at which token of returning toleration Uncle Sheba took heart again. Having curtly told him to clear the table, Aun' Sheba proceeded to make from the finest of flour the delicate cakes which she always sold fresh and almost warm from her stove, and before starting out on her vending tour of the streets, the store-room was locked against the one burglar she feared.

CHAPTER IV

MARA

ON the same evening which witnessed Uncle Sheba's false step and its temporarily disastrous results, Owen Clancy sat brooding over his fire in his bachelor apartment. If his sitting-room did not suggest wealth, it certainly indicated refined and intellectual tastes and a fair degree of prosperity. A few fine pictures were on the walls, an unusually well-selected library, although a small one, was in a bookcase, while upon the table lay several of the best magazines and reviews of the period. Above the mantel was suspended a cavalry sabre, its scabbard so dented as to suggest that it had seen much and severe service. Young Clancy's eyes were fixed upon it, and his revery was so deep that a book fell from his hand to the floor without his notice. His thoughts, however, were dwelling upon a young girl. Strange that a deadly weapon should be allied to her in association. Yet so it was. He never could look upon that sabre which his father had used effectively throughout the Civil War, without thinking of Mara Wallingford. Neither this object nor any other was required to produce thoughts of her, for he passed few waking hours in which she was not present to his fancy. He loved her sincerely, and felt that she knew it, and he also hoped that she concealed a deeper regard for him than she would admit even to herself. Indeed he almost believed that if he could share fully with her all the ideas and antipathies symbolized by the battered scabbard before him, his

course of love would run smoothly. It was just at this point that the trouble between them arose. She was looking back; he, forward. He could not enter into her sad and bitter retrospection, feeling that this was morbid and worse than useless. Remembering how cruelly she and her kindred had suffered, he made great allowances for her, and had often tried to soften the bitterness in her heart by reminding her that he, too, had lost kindred and property. By delicate efforts he had sought to show the futility of clinging to a dead past, and a cause lost beyond hope, but Mara would only become grave and silent when such matters were touched upon.

Clancy had been North repeatedly on business, and had never discovered a particle of hostility toward him or his section in the men with whom he dealt and associated. They invited him to their homes; he met the women of their families, from whom he often received rather more than courtesy, for his fine appearance and a certain courtliness of manner, inherited from his aristocratic father, had won a thinly veiled admiration of which he had been agreeably conscious. Since these people had no controversy with him, how could he continue to cherish enmity and prejudice against them? His warm Southern nature revolted at receiving hearty good-will and not returning it in kind. There was nothing of a "we-forgive-you" in the bearing of his Northern acquaintances, nor was there any effusiveness in cordiality with an evident design of reassuring him. He was made to feel that he was guilty of an anachronism in brooding over the war, that it had been forgotten except as history, and that the present with its opportunities, and the future with its promise, were the themes of thought. The elements of life, energy, hopefulness with which he came in contact had appealed to him powerfully, for they were in harmony with his youth, ambition, yes, and his patriotism. "The South can never grow rich and strong by sulking," he had often assured himself, "and since the old dream is impossible, and we are to be one people,

why shouldn't we accept the fact and unite in mutual helpfulness?"

Reason, ambition, and policy prompted him to the divergence of view and action which was alienating Mara. "Imitation of her example and spirit would be political and financial suicide on our part," he broke out. "I love her; and if she loved in the same degree, I would be more to her than bitter memories. She would help me achieve a happy future for us both. As it is, I am so pulled in different ways that I'm half insane," and with contracted brow he sprang up and paced the floor.

But he could not hold to this mood long, and soon his face softened into an expression of anxiety and commiseration. Resuming his chair his thoughts ran on, "She isn't happy either. For some cause I reckon she suffers more than I do. She looked pale to-day when I met her, and her face was full of anxiety until she saw me, and then it masked all feeling. She has worn that same cloak now for three winters. Great Heaven! if she should be in want, and I not know it! Yet what could I do if she were? Why will she be so proud and obdurate? I believe that gaunt, white-haired aunt has more to do with her course than her own heart. Well, I can't sit here and think about it any longer. If I see her something may become clearer, and I must see her before I go North again."

Mara Wallingford's troubles and anxieties had indeed been culminating of late. Almost her sole inheritance had been sadness, trouble and enmity. Not only had her unhappy mother's history been kept fresh in her memory by her great-aunt, Mrs. Hunter, but the very blood that coursed in her veins and the soul that looked out from her dark, melancholy eyes had received from that mother characteristics which it is of the province of this story to reveal. To poor Mary Wallingford, the death of her father and of her husband had been the unspeakable tragedy and wrong which had destroyed her life; and the long agony of the mother had deprived her offspring of the natural and joyous

impulses of childhood and youth. If Mara had been left to the care of a judicious guardian—one who had sought by all wholesome means to counteract inherited tendencies, a most cheerful and hopeful life would have been developed, but in this respect the girl had been most unfortunate. The mind grows by what it feeds upon, and Mrs. Hunter's spirit had become so imbittered by dwelling upon her woes and losses that she was incapable of thinking or speaking of much else. She had never been a woman of warm, quick sympathies. She had seen little of the world, and, in a measure, was incapable of seeing it, whatever advantages she might have had. This would have been true of her, no matter where her lot had been cast, for she was a born conservative. What she had been brought up to believe would always be true; what she had been made familiar with by early custom would always be right, and anything different would be viewed with disapproval or intoleration. Too little allowance is often made for characters of this kind. We may regret rigidity and narrowness all we please, but there should be some respect for downright sincerity and the inability to see both sides of a question.

It often happens that if natures are narrow they are correspondingly intense; and this was true of Mrs. Hunter. She idolized her husband dead, more perhaps than if he had been living. Her brother and nephew were household martyrs, and little Mara had been taught to revere their memories as a devout Catholic pays homage to a patron saint. Between the widow and all that savored of the North, the author of her woes, there was a great gulf, and the changes wrought by the passing years had made no impression, for she would not change. She simply shut her eyes and closed her ears to whatever was not in accord with her own implacable spirit. She grew cold toward those who yielded to the kindly influences of peace and the healing balm of time; she had bitter scorn for such as were led by their interests to fraternize with the North and Northern people. In her indiscrimination and prejudice

they were all typified by the unscrupulous adventurers who had made a farce of government and legally robbed the South when prostrate and bleeding after the War. She and her niece had been taxed out of their home to sustain a rule they loathed. Not a few women in Boston, in like circumstances, would be equally bitter and equally incapable of taking the broad views of an historian.

The influence of such a concentrated mind warped almost to the point of monomania, upon a child like Mara, predisposed from birth to share in a similar spirit, can be readily estimated. Peace and time, moreover, had not brought the ameliorating tendencies of prosperity, but rather a continuous and hopeless pressure of poverty.

Mrs. Hunter had been incapable of doing more than save what she could out of the wreck of their fortunes. There were no near relations, and those remaining, with most of their friends and acquaintances who had not been alienated, were struggling like themselves in straitened circumstances. Yet out of this poverty, many open, generous hands would have been stretched to the widow and her ward had they permitted their want to be known. But they felt that they would rather starve than do this, for they belonged to that class which suffers in proud silence. Although they had practiced an economy that was so severe as to be detrimental to both health and character, their principal had melted away, and their jewelry and plate, with the exception of heirlooms that could not be sold without a sense of sacrilege, had been quietly disposed of. The end of their resources was near, and they knew not what to do. Mara had tried to eke out their means by fancy-work, but she had no great aptitude for such tasks, and her education was too defective and old-fashioned for the equipment of a modern teacher. She was well read, especially in the classics, yet during the troubled years of her brief life she had not been given the opportunity to acquire the solid, practical knowledge which would enable her to instruct others. The exclusiveness and seclusion, so congenial to her aunt, had been

against her, and now reticence and a disposition to shrink from the world had become a characteristic of her own.

She felt, however, that her heart, if not her will, was weak toward Owen Clancy. In him had once centred the hope of her life, and from him she now feared a wound that could never heal.

She underrated his affection as he did hers. He felt that she should throw off the incubus of the past for his sake; she believed that any depth of love on his part should render impossible all intercourse with the North beyond what was strictly necessary for the transaction of business. In order to soften her prejudices, he had told her of his social experiences in New York, and, as a result, had seen her face hardened against him. . . . She had no words of bitter scorn such as her aunt had indulged in when learning of the fact. She had only thought in sorrow that since he was "capable of accepting hospitality from the people who had murdered her kindred and blighted the South, there was an impassable gulf between them."

Now, however, the imperative questions of bread and shelter were uppermost. She believed that Clancy could and would solve these questions at once if permitted, and it was characteristic of her pride and what she regarded as her loyalty, that she never once allowed herself to think of this alternative. Yet what could she and her aunt do? They were in the pathetic position of gentlewomen compelled to face the world with unskilled hands. This is bad enough at best, but far worse when hands are half paralyzed by pride and timidity as well as ignorance. The desperate truth, however, stared them in the face. Do something they must, and that speedily.

They were contemplating the future in a hopeless sort of dread and perplexity on the evening when Aunt Sheba and young Clancy's thoughts were drawn toward them in such deep solicitude. This fact involves no mystery. The warm-hearted colored woman had seen and heard little things which suggested the truth, and the sympathetic lover had

seen the face of the young girl when she was off her guard. Its expression had haunted him, and impelled him to see her at once, although she had chilled his hopes of late.

When compelled to leave the old home, Mrs. Hunter had taken the second floor of a small brick house located on a side street. In spite of herself Mara's heart fluttered wildly for a moment when the woman who occupied the first story brought up Clancy's card.

"You can't see him to-night," said her aunt, frowning.

Mara hesitated a moment, and then said firmly, "Yes, I will see him. Please ask him to come up." When they were alone, she added in a low voice, "I shall see him once more, probably for the last time socially. We cannot know what changes are in store for us."

"Well, I won't see him," said Mrs. Hunter, frigidly; and she left the room.

CHAPTER V

PAST AND FUTURE

UNDER the impulses of his solicitude and affection Clancy entered quickly, and took Mara's hand in such a strong, warm grasp that the color would come into her pale face. In spite of her peculiarities and seeming coldness, she was a girl who could easily awaken a passionate love in a warm, generous-hearted man like the one who looked into her eyes with something like entreaty in his own. She had a beauty peculiar to herself, and now a strange loveliness which touched his very soul. The quick flush upon her cheeks inspired hope, and a deep emotion, which she could not wholly suppress, found momentary expression. Even in that brief instant she was transfigured, for the woman within her was revealed. As if conscious of a weakness which seemed to her almost criminal, her face became rigid, and she said formally, "Please be seated, Mr. Clancy."

"You must not speak to me in that way and in that tone," he began impetuously, and then paused, for he was chilled by her cold, questioning gaze. Her will was so strong, and found such powerful expression in her dark, sad eyes, that for a moment he was dumb and embarrassed. Then his own high spirit rallied, and a purpose grew strong that she should hear him, and hear the truth also. His gray eyes, that had wavered for a moment, grew steady in their encounter with hers.

Seating himself on the opposite side of the table, he said

quietly, "You think I have no right to speak to you in such a way."

"I fear we think differently on many subjects, Mr. Clancy."

"Admitting that, would you like a man to be a weak echo of yourself?"

"A man should not be weak in any respect. I do not think it necessary, however, to raise the question of my likes or dislikes."

"I must differ with you, Mara," he replied gravely.

"I agree with you now, fully, Mr. Clancy. We differ. Had we not better change the subject?"

"No, not unless you would be unfair. I am at a disadvantage. I am in your home. You are a lady, and therefore can compel me to leave unsaid what I am bent on saying. We have been friends, have we not?"

She bowed her acquiescence.

"Well," he continued a little bitterly, "I have one Southern trait left—frankness. You know I would speak in a different character if permitted, if I received one particle of encouragement." Then, with a sudden flush, he said firmly, "I will speak as I feel. I only pay homage in telling you what you must already know. I love you, and would make you my wife."

Her face became very pale as she averted it, and replied briefly, "You are mistaken, Mr. Clancy."

"Mara, I am not mistaken. Will you be fair enough to listen to me? We agree that we differ. Can we not also agree that we differ conscientiously? You cannot think me false, even though you say I am mistaken. Hitherto you have opposed to me a dead wall of silence. Though you will not listen to me as a lover, you might both listen and speak to me as a friend. That word would be hollow indeed if estrangment could result from honest differences of opinion."

"It is far more than a difference of opinion."

"Let the difference be what it may, Mara," he answered

gently, resolving not to be baffled, "if you are so sure you are right, you should at least be willing to accord to one whom you once regarded as a friend the privilege of pleading his cause. Truth and right do not intrench themselves in repelling silence. That is the refuge of prejudice. If you will hear my side of the question, I will listen with the deepest interest to yours, and believe me you have a powerful ally in my heart."

"Your head has gained such ascendency over your heart, Mr. Clancy, that you cannot understand me. In some women the strongest reasons for or against a thing proceed from the latter organ."

"Is yours, then, so cold toward me?" he asked sadly.

"It is not cold toward the memory of my murdered parents," she replied with an ominous flash in her eyes.

Clancy looked at her in momentary surprise, then said firmly, "My father eventually died from injuries received in the war, but he was not murdered. He was wounded in fair battle in which he struck as well as received blows."

Again there was a quick flush upon her pale face, but now it was one of indignation as she said bitterly, "Fair battle! So you call it fair battle when men are overpowered in defending their homes. If armed robbers broke into your house, and you gave blows as well as received them, would you not be murdered if it so happened that you were killed? Why should we speak of these subjects further?" And there was a trace of scorn in her tone.

His pride was touched, and he was all the more determined that he would be heard. "I can give you good reason why we should speak further," he answered resolutely yet quietly. "However strong your feeling may be, I have too much respect for your intelligence and too much confidence in your courage to believe that you will weakly shrink from hearing one who is as conscientious as yourself. I cannot accept your illustration, and do not think the instance you give is parallel. In the differences between the North and the South, an appeal was made to the sword. If I had

been old enough I would have fought at my father's side. But the question is now settled. No matter how we feel about it, the North and the South must live together, and it is not my nature to live in hate. Suppose I could—suppose it were possible for all Southern men to feel as you do and act in accordance with such bitter enmity, what would be the result? It would be suicide. Our land would become a desert. Capital and commerce would leave our cities because there would be no security among a people implacably hostile. Such a course would be more destructive than invading armies. My business, the business of the city, is largely with the North. If native Southern men tried to transact it in a cold, relentless spirit, we should lose the chance to live, much less to do anything for our land. We have suffered too much from this course already, and have allowed strangers, who care nothing for us, to take much that might have been ours. I love the South too well to advocate a course which would prove so fatal. What is more, I cannot think it would be right. The North of your imagination does not exist. I cannot hate people who have no hate for me, but on the contrary abound in honest, kindly feeling."

She had listened quietly with her face turned from him, and now met his eyes with an inscrutable expression in hers. "Have I not listened?" she asked.

"But you have not answered," he urged, "you have not even tried to show me wherein I am wrong."

The eyes whose sombre blackness had been like a veil now flamed with the anger she had long repressed. "How little you understand me," she said passionately, "when you think I can argue questions like these. You are virtually asking what to me is sacrilege. I have listened to you patiently, at what cost to my feelings you are incapable of knowing. Do you think that I can forget that my grandfather was mangled to death, and that his last words were, 'I was only trying to defend my home'? Do you think I can forget that my father was trampled into the

very earth by your Northern friends with whom you must fraternize as well as trade? I will not speak of my martyred mother. Her name and agony are too sacred to be named in a political argument," and she uttered these last words with intense bitterness. Then rising to end the interview, she continued coldly in biting sacrcasm, "Mr. Clancy, I have no relations with the North. I do not deal in cotton, and none of its fibre has found its way into my nature."

At these words he flushed hotly, sprang up, but by an evident and powerful effort controlled himself, and sat down again.

"How could you even imagine," she added, "that words, arguments, political and financial considerations would tempt me to be disloyal to the memory of my dead kindred?"

"You *are* disloyal to them," he said firmly.

"What!"

"Mara, I am indeed proving myself a friend because I am such and more, and because you so greatly need a friend. Your kindred had hearts in their breasts. Would they doom you to the life upon which you are entering? Can you not see that you are passing deeper and deeper into the shadow of the past? What good can it do them? Could they speak would they say, 'We wish our sorrows to blight your life'? You are not happy, you cannot be happy. It is contrary to the law of God, it is impossible to human nature, that happiness and bitter, unrelenting enmity should exist in the same heart. You are not only unhappy, but you are in deep trouble of some kind. I saw that from your face to-day before you saw me and could mask from a friend its expression of deep anxiety. You shall hear the truth from me which I fear you hear from no other, and your harsh words shall not deter me from my resolute purpose to be kind, to rescue you virtually from a condition of mind that is so morbid, so unhealthful, that it will blight your life. I cannot so wrong your father and mother as even to imagine that it could be their wish to see your

beautiful young life grow more and more shadowed, to see you struggling under burdens which strong, loving hands would lift from you. Can you believe that they, happy in heaven, can wish you no happiness on earth?"

There was a grave, convincing earnestness in his tone, and a truth in his words hard to resist. What she considered loyalty to her kindred had been like her religion, and he had charged her with disloyalty, yes, and while he spoke the thought would assert itself that her course might be a wretched mistake. Although intrenched in prejudice, and fortified against his words by the thought and feeling of her life, she had been made to doubt her position and feel that she might be a self-elected martyr. The assertion that she was doing what would be contrary to the wishes of her dead kindred pierced the very citadel of her opposition, and tended to remove the one belief which had been the sustaining rock beneath her feet. She knew she had been severe with him, and she was touched by his forbearance, his resolute purpose to befriend her. She remembered her poverty, the almost desperate extremity in which she was, and her heart upbraided her for refusing the hand held out so loyally and persistently to her help. She became confused, torn, and overwhelmed by conflicting emotions; her lip quivered, and, bowing her head in her hands, she sobbed, "You are breaking my heart."

In an instant he was on one knee at her side. "Mara," he began gently, "if I wound it is only that I may heal. Truly no girl in this city needs a friend as you do. For some reason I feel this to be true in my very soul. Who in God's universe would forbid you a loyal friend?" and he tried to take her hand.

"I forbid you to be her friend," said a stern voice.

Springing up, Clancy encountered the gaze of a gaunt, white-haired woman, with implacable enmity stamped upon her thin visage. The young man's eyes darkened as they steadily met those of Mrs. Hunter, and it was evident that the forbearance he had manifested toward the girl he loved

would not be extended to her guardian. Still he controlled himself, and waited till she should speak again.

"Mr. Clancy," she resumed after a moment, "Miss Wallingford is my ward; I received her from her dying mother, and so have rights which you must respect. I forbid you seeing her or speaking to her again."

"Mrs. Hunter," he replied, "permit me to tell you with the utmost courtesy that I shall not obey you. Only Mara herself can forbid me from seeing her or speaking to her."

"What right have you, sir—"

"The best of rights, Mrs. Hunter, I love the girl; you do not. As remorselessly as a graven image you would sacrifice her on the altar of your hate."

"Mr. Clancy, you must not speak to my aunt in that way. She has been devoted to me from my infancy."

"On the contrary, she has devoted you from infancy to sadness, gloom, and bitter memories. She is developing within you the very qualities most foreign to a woman's heart. Instead of teaching you to enshrine the memory of your kindred in tender, loving remembrance, she is forging that memory into a chain to restrain you from all that is natural to your years. She is teaching you to wreck your life in fruitless opposition to the healing influences that have followed peace. Madam, answer me—the question is plain and fair—what can you hope to accomplish by your enmity to me and to the principles of hope and progress which, in this instance, I represent, but the blighting of this girl whom I love?"

"You are insolent, sir," cried Mrs. Hunter, trembling with rage.

"No, madam, I am honest, and be the result to me what it may, you shall both hear the truth to-night."

"This is our home," was the harsh response, "and you are not a gentleman if you do not leave it instantly."

"I shall certainly do so. Mara, am I to see you and speak to you no more?"

She had sunk into a chair, and again buried her face in her hands.

He waited a moment, but she gave no sign. Then with his eyes fixed on her he sadly and slowly left the apartment.

At last she sprang up with the faint cry, "Owen," but her aunt stood between her and the door, and he was gone.

CHAPTER VI

"PAHNASHIP"

WHEN Mara realized that her lover had indeed gone, that in fact he had been driven forth, and that she had said not one word to pave the way for a future meeting, a sense of desolation she had never known before overwhelmed her. Hitherto she had been sustained by an unfaltering belief that no other course than the one which her aunt had inculcated was possible; that, cost what it might, and end as it might, it was her heritage. All now was confused and in doubt. She had heard her lofty, self-sacrificing purpose virtually characterized as vain and wrong. She had idolized the memory of her father and mother, and yet had been told that her course was the very one of which they would not approve. The worst of it all was that it now seemed true, for she could not believe that they would wish her to be so utterly unhappy. In spite of her unworldliness and lack of practical training, the strong common-sense of Clancy's question would recur, "What good will it do?" She was not sacrificing her heart to sustain or further any cause, and her heart now cried out against the wrong it was receiving. These miserable thoughts rushed through her mind and pressed so heavily upon all hope that she leaned her arms upon the table, and, burying her face, sobbed aloud.

"Mara," said her aunt, severely, "I did not think you could be so weak."

Until the storm of passionate grief passed, the young girl gave no heed to Mrs. Hunter's reproaches or expostu-

lations. At last she became quiet, as much from exhaustion as from self-control, and said wearily, "You need worry no further about Mr. Clancy. He will not come again. If he has a spark of pride or manhood left, he will never look at me again," and a quick, heart-broken sob would rise at the thought.

"I should hope you would not look at him again after his insolence to me."

Mara did not reply. For the first time her confidence in her aunt had been shaken, for she could not but feel that Mrs. Hunter, in her judgment of Clancy, saw but one side of the question. She did not approve of his stern arraignment of her aunt, but she at least remembered his great provocation, and that he had been impelled to his harsh words by loyalty to her.

At last she said, "Aunty, I'm too worn out to think or speak any more to-night. There is a limit to endurance, and I've reached it."

"That's just where the trouble is," Mrs. Hunter tried to say reassuringly. "In the morning you will be your own true, brave self-again."

"What's the use of being brave; what can I be brave for?" thought Mara in the solitude of her room.

Although her sleep was brief and troubled, she had time to grow calm and collect her thoughts. While she would not admit it to herself, Clancy's repeated assertions of his love had a subtle and sustaining power. She could see no light in the future, but her woman's heart would revert to this truth as to a secret treasure.

In the morning after sitting for a time almost in silence over their meagre breakfast, her aunt began: "Mara, I wish you to realize the truth in regard to Mr. Clancy. It is one of those things which must be nipped in the bud. There is only one ending to his path, and that is full acceptance of Northern rule and Northern people. What is more, after his words to me, I will never abide under the same roof with him again."

"Aunty," said Mara sadly, "we have much else to think about besides Mr. Clancy. How are we going to keep a roof over our own heads?"

Compelled to face their dire need, Mrs. Hunter broke out into bitter invective against those whom she regarded as the cause of their poverty.

"Aunty," protested Mara, almost irritably, for her nerves were sadly worn, "what good can such words do? We must live, I suppose, and you must advise me."

"Mara, I am almost tempted to believe that you regret—"

"Aunty, you must fix your mind on the only question to be considered. What are we to do? You know our money is almost gone."

Mrs. Hunter's only response was to stare blankly at her niece. She could economize and be content with very little as long as her habitual trains of thought were not interrupted and she could maintain her proud seclusion. Accustomed to remote plantation life, she knew little of the ways of the modern world, and much less of the methods by which a woman could obtain a livelihood from it. To the very degree that she had lived in the memories and traditions of the past, she had unfitted herself to understand the conditions of present life or to cope with its requirements. Now she was practically helpless. "We can't go and reveal our situation to our friends," she began hesitatingly.

"Certainly not," said Mara, "for most of them have all they can do to sustain themselves, and I would rather starve than live on the charity of those on whom we have no claim."

"We might take less expensive rooms."

"What good would that do, Aunty? If we can't earn anything, five dollars will be as hard to raise as ten."

"Oh, to think that people of the very best blood in the State, who once had scores of slaves to work for them, should be so wronged, robbed and reduced!"

Mara heaved a long, weary sigh, and Clancy's words would repeat themselves again and again. She saw how

utterly incapable her aunt was to render any assistance in their desperate straits. Even the stress of their present emergency could not prevent her mind from vainly reverting to a past that was gone forever. Again her confidence was more severely shaken as she was compelled to doubt the wisdom of their habits of seclusion and reticence, of living on from year to year engrossed by memories, instead of adapting themselves to a new order of things which they were powerless to prevent. "Truly," she thought, "my father and mother never could have wished me to be in this situation out of love for them. It is true I could never go to the length that he does without great hypocrisy, and I do not see the need of it. I can never forget the immense wrong done to me and mine, but Aunty should have taught me something more than indignation and hostility, however just the causes for them may be."

While such was the tenor of her thoughts, she only said a little bitterly: "Oh, that I knew how to do something! My old nurse, Aun' Sheba, is better off than we are."

"She belongs to us yet," said Mrs. Hunter, almost fiercely.

"You could never make her or any one else think so," was the weary reply. "Well, now that I have thought of her, I believe I could advise with her better than any one else."

"Advise with a slave? Oh, Mara!—"

"Whom shall I advise with then?" And there was a sharp ring in the girl's tone.

"Oh, any one, so that it be not Mr. Clancy," replied her aunt irritably. "Were it not that you so needed a protector, I could wish that I were dead."

"Aunt," said Mara, gently yet firmly, "we must give up this hopeless, bitter kind of talk. I, at least, must do something to earn honest bread, and I am too depressed and sad at heart to carry any useless burdens. Mr. Clancy said much that was wrong last night, and there are matters about which he and I can never agree, but surely he was right in

saying that my father and mother would not wish to see me crushed body and soul. If I am to live, I must find a way to live and yet keep my self-respect. I suppose the natural way would be to go to those who knew my father and grandfather; but they would ask me what I could do. What could I tell them? It would seem almost like asking charity."

"Of course it would," assented her aunt.

Then silence fell between them.

Before Mara could finish her morning duties and prepare for the street, a heavy step was heard on the stairs, then a knock at the door. Opening it, the young girl saw the very object of her thoughts, for Aun' Sheba's ample form and her great basket filled all the space.

"Oh, Aun' Sheba," cried the girl, a gleam of hope lighting up her eyes, "I'm so glad to see you. I was just starting for your cabin."

"Bress your heart, honey, Aun' Sheba'll allus be proud to hab you come. My spec's, Missus," and she dropped her basket and a courtesy before Mrs. Hunter.

"Aun' Sheba," said Mara, giving the kindly vender a chair, "you are so much better off than we are. I was saying just that to aunty this morning."

"Why, honey, I'se only a po' culled body, and you'se a beauty like you moder, bress her po' deah heart."

"Yes, Aun' Sheba, you were a blessing to her," said Mara with moist eyes. "How you watched over her and helped to take care of me! Perhaps you can help take care of me again. For some reason, I can speak to you and tell you our troubles easier than to any one else in the world."

"Dat's right, honey lam', dat's right. Who else you tell your troubles to but Aun' Sheba? Didn't I comfort you on dis bery bres time an' time agin when you was a little mite? Now you'se bigger and hab bigger troubles, I'se bigger too," and Aunt Sheba shook with laughter like a great form of jelly as she wiped her eyes with sympathy.

"Aun' Sheba," said Mara in a voice full of unconscious

pathos, "I don't know what to do, yet I must do something. It seems to me that I could be almost happy if I were as sure of earning my bread as you are."

"Now, doggone dat ar lazy husban' o' mine. But he got his 'serts an'll git mo' ob dem eff he ain't keerful. I jes' felt it in my bones las' night how 'twas wid you, an I 'lowed how I'd see you dis mawnin', an' den he began to go on as ef you was nothin' but white folks stid ob my deah honey lam' dat I nussed till you was like my own chile. But he won' do so no mo'."

"Oh, Aun' Sheba, believe me, I don't wish to interfere with any of your duties to him," began Mara earnestly.

"Duty to him," exclaimed the colored woman with a snort of indignation. "He mout tink a little 'bout his duty to me. Doan you trubble 'bout him, for he's boun' to git mo' dan his shar anyhow. Now I know de good Lawd put it in my min' to come heah dis mawnin' case you was on my min' las' night. You needn't tink you kin go hungry while Aun' Sheba hab a crus'."

"I know what a big heart you've got, but that won't do, Aun' Sheba. Can you think I would live idly on your hard-earned money?"

"Well, 'tis my money, an' I make mo dan you tink, an' a heap mo' dan I let Unc. know about. He'd be fer settin' up his kerrige ef he knew," and she again laughed in hearty self-complacency. "Why, honey, I can 'sport you an' Missus widout pinchin', an' who gwine to know 'bout it?"

"I'd know about it," said Mara, rising and putting her hand caressingly on the woman's shoulder, "yet I feel your kindness in the very depths of my heart. Come, I have a thought. Let me see what's in your basket."

"Ony cakes dis mawnin', honey. Help you's sef."

"Oh, how delicious they are," said Mara eating one, and thoughtfully regarding her sable friend. "You beat me making cakes, Aun' Sheba, and I thought I was good at it."

"So you am, Missy, so you am, fer I taught you mysef."

"Aun' Sheba, suppose we go into partnership."

"Pahnaship!" ejaculated Aun' Sheba in bewilderment.

"Oh, Mara!" Mrs. Hunter expostulated indignantly.

"Well, I suppose it would be a very one-sided affair," admitted the girl, blushing in a sort of honest shame. "You are doing well without any help from me, and don't need any. I'm very much like a man who wants to share in a good business which has already been built up, but I don't know how to do anything else, and could at least learn better every day, and—and—I thought—I must do something —I thought, perhaps, if I made the cakes and some other things, and you sold them, Aun' Sheba, you wouldn't have to work so hard, and—well, there might be enough profit for us both."

"Now de Lawd bress you heart, honey, dar ain't no need ob you blisterin' you'se pretty face ober a fiah, bakin' cakes an' sich. I kin—"

"No, no, Aun' Sheba, you can't, for I won't let you."

"Mara," protested Mrs. Hunter, severely, "do you realize what you are saying? Suppose it became known that you were in—in—" but the lady could not bring herself to complete the humiliating sentence.

"Yis, honey, Missus am right. De idee! Sech quality as you in pahnaship wid ole Aun' Sheba!" and she laughed at the preposterous relationship.

"Perhaps it needn't be known," said Mara, daunted for a moment. Then the necessities in the case drove her forward, and, remembering that her aunt was unable to suggest or even contemplate anything practicable, she said resolutely, "Let it be known. Others of our social rank are supporting themselves, and I'm too proud to be ashamed to do it myself even in this humble way. What troubles me most is that I'm making such a one-sided offer to Aun' Sheba. She don't need my help at all, and I need hers so much."

"Now see heah, honey, is your heart set on dis ting?"

"Yes, it is," replied Mara, earnestly. "My heart was

like lead till you came, and it would be almost as light as one of these cakes if I knew I could surely earn my living. Oh, Aun' Sheba, you've had troubles, and you know what sore troubles my poor mother had, but neither you nor she ever knew the fear, the sickening dread which comes over one when you don't know where your bread is to come from or how you are to keep a roof over your head. Aunty, do listen to reason. Making cake and other things for Aun' Sheba to sell would not be half so humiliating as going to people of my own station and revealing my ignorance, or trying to do what I don't know how to do, knowing all the time that I was only tolerated. My plan leaves me in seclusion, and if any one thinks less of me they can leave me alone. I don't want to make my way among strangers; I don't feel that I can. This plan enables us to stay together, Aunty, and you must know now that we can't drift any longer."

Weile Mara was speaking Aun' Sheba's thrifty thoughts had been busy. Her native shrewdness gave her a keen insight into Mrs. Hunter's character, and she knew that the widow's mind was so warped that she was practically as helpless as a child. While, in her generous love for Mara and from a certain loyalty to her old master's family, she was willing temporarily to assume what would be a very heavy burden, she was inwardly glad, as she grew accustomed to the idea, that Mara was willing to do her share. Indeed it would be a great relief if her basket could be filled for her, and she said, heartily, "Takes some time, honey, you know, fer an idee to git into my tick head, but when it gits dar it stick. Now you'se sensible, an' Missus'll see it soon. You'se on de right track. Ob cose, I'd be proud ob pahnaship, an' it'll be a great eas'n up to me. Makes a mighty long day, Missy, to git up in de mawnin' an ' do my bakin' an' den tromp, tromp, tromp. I could put in an hour or two extra sleep, an' dat counts in a woman ob my age an' heft. But, law sakes! look at dat clock dar. I mus' be gitten along. Set you deah little heart at res',

honey. I'se comin' back dis ebenin', an' we'se start in kin' ob easy like so you hab a chance to larn and not get 'scouraged."

"I can't approve of this plan at all," said Mrs. Hunter, loftily, "I wash my hands of it."

"Now, now, Missus, you do jes' dat—wash you hans ob it, but don' you 'fere wid Missy, kase it'll set her heart at res' and keep a home fer you bof. We's gwine to make a pile, honey, an' den de roses come back in you cheeks," and nodding encouragingly, she departed, leaving more hope and cheer behind her than Mara had known for many a month.

To escape the complaining of her aunt, Mara shut herself in her room and thought long and deeply. The conclusion was, "The gulf between us has grown wider and deeper. When Mr. Clancy learns how I have sought independence without his aid—" but she only finished the sentence by a sad. bitter smile.

CHAPTER VII

MARA'S PURPOSE

"NEBER had sech luck in all my bawn days," soliloquized Aun' Sheba as she saw the bottom of her basket early in the day. "All my cus'mers kin' o' smilin' like de sunshine. Only Marse Clancy grumpy. He go by me like a brack cloud. I'se got a big grudge against dat ar young man. He use to be bery sweet on Missy. He mus' be taken wid some Norvern gal, and dat's 'nuff fer me. Ef he lebe my honey lam' now she so po', dar's a bad streak in his blood and he don' 'long to us any mo'. I wouldn't be s'prised ef dey hadn't had a squar meal fer a fortnight. I can make blebe dat I wants to take my dinner 'long o' dem to sabe time, an' den dey'll hab a dinner wat'll make Missy real peart 'fore she gin to work," and full of her kindly intentions she bought a juicy steak, some vegetables, a quantity of the finest flour, sugar, coffee, and some spices.

Mara had slipped out and invested the greater part of her diminished hoard in the materials essential to her new undertaking. Not the least among them, as she regarded it, was an account book. When, therefore, Aun' Sheba bustled in between one and two o'clock, she found some bulky bundles on the kitchen table over which Mrs. Hunter had already groaned aloud.

"Law sakes, honey, what all dese?" the colored aunty asked.

"They are my start in trade," replied Mara, smiling.

"Den you's gwine to hab a mighty big start, fer I got lots o' tings in dis basket."

"Why, Aun' Sheba! Did you think I was going to let you furnish the materials?"

"Ef you furnish de makin' up ob de 'terials what mo' you oughter do, I'd like ter know?"

"Aun' Sheba, I could cheat you out af your two black eyes."

"Dey see mo' dan you tink, Missy," she replied, nodding sagaciously.

"Yes, I reckon they do, but my eyes must look after your interests as well as my own. I am going to be an honest partner. Do you see this book?"

"What dat ar got to do wid de pahnaship?"

"You will see. It will prevent you from ever losing a penny that belongs to you."

"Penny, indeed! As if I'se gwine to stand on a penny!"

"Well, I am. Little as I know about business, I am sure it will be more satisfactory if careful accounts are kept, and you must promise to tell me the whole truth about things. That's the way partners do, you know, and everything is put down in black and white."

"Oh, go 'long wid you, honey, an' hab you own way. All in my pahnaship go down in black, I s'pose, an' you'se in white. How funny it all am!" and the old woman sat back in her chair and laughed in her joyous content.

"It is all a very humiliating farce to me," said Mrs. Hunter, looking severely at the former property.

"Yas'm," said Aun' Sheba, suddenly becoming stolid as a graven image.

"Aunty," said Mara firmly but gently, "the time has come when I must act, for your sake as well as my own. Nothing will prevent me from carrying out this plan, except its failure to provide for Aun' Sheba as well as for ourselves."

"Well, I wash my hands of it, and, if your course be-

comes generally known, I shall have it understood that you acted without my approval." And she rose and left the kitchen with great dignity.

When the door closed upon her, Aun' Sheba again shook in vast and silent mirth.

"Doan you trubble long o' Missus, honey," she said, nodding encouragingly at Mara. "She jes' like one dat lib in de dark an' can't see notin' right." Then in sudden revulsion of feeling she added, "You po' honey lam', doan you see you'se got to take keer ob her jes' as ef she was a chile?"

"Yes," said Mara, sadly, "I've been compelled to see it at last."

"Now doan you be 'scouraged. 'Tween us we take keer ob her, an' she be a heap betteh off eben ef she doan know it. You hab no dinner yit?"

"We were just going to get it as you came."

"Well now, honey, I habn't had a bite nudder, an' I'se gwine to take dinneh heah ef you'se willin'."

"Why, surely, Aun' Sheba. It's little we have, you but know I'd share my last crust with you."

Again the guest was bubbling over with good-natured merriment. "We ain't got to de las' crus' yit, an' I couldn't make my dinneh on a crus' nohow. Dar's one ting I'se jes' got to 'sist on in de pahnaship. I don't keer notin' 'bout 'count books and sich, but ef we'se gwine to make a fort'n you got to hab a heap o' po'er in you'se arms. You got to hab a strong back and feel peart all ober. Dis de ony ting I 'sist on. Now how you gwine to be plump and strong?"

"Oh, I'm pretty strong, and I'll get stronger now that I have hope, and see my way a little."

"Hope am bery good fer 'sert, honey, but we want somep'n solider to start in on. You jes' set de table in de oder room, an' I'll be de brack raben dat'll pervide. Now you must min' kase I'se doing 'cording to Scripter, an' we neber hab no luck 'tall if we go agin Scripter."

"Very well," said Mara, laughing, "you shall have your

own way. I see through all your talk, but I know you'll feel bad if you can't carry out your purpose. You'll have a better dinner, too."

"Yeh, yeh, she knows a heap moah'n me," thought Aun' Sheba when alone, "but I know some tings too, bress her heart. I kin see dat her cheeks am pale and thin an' dat her eyes am gettin' so big and brack dat her purty face am like a little house wid big winders. She got quality blood in her vein, shuah, but habn't got neah 'nuff. Heah's de 'terial wat gibs hope sometimes better'n preachin," and she whipped out the steak and prepared it for the broiler. Then she clapped some potatoes into the oven, threw together the constituents of light biscuit, and put the coffee over the fire. A natural born cook, she was deft and quick, and had a substantial repast ready in an amazingly short time. Soon it was smoking on the table, and then she said with a significant little nod at Mara, "Now I'se gwine to wait on Missus like ole times."

Mara understood her and did not protest, for she felt the necessity of humoring her aunt, who quite thawed out at the semblance of her former state. While the poor lady enlarged on the thought that such should be the normal condition of affairs, and would be if the world were not wholly out of joint, she nevertheless dined so heartily as to prove that she could still enjoy the good things of life if they were provided without personal compromise on her part. Mara made a silent note of this, and felt more strongly than ever that her aunt's needs and not her words must control her actions. After dinner she said, "Come, aunty, you have had much to try your nerves of late, and there must be much more not in harmony with your feelings. It can't be helped, but I absolve you of all responsibility, and I know very well if you had what was once your own, I would not have to raise my hand. You see I am not seeking relief in the way that is so utterly distasteful to you, and, when you come to think this plan all over, you will admit that it is the one that would attract the least at-

tention, and involve the least change. Now lie down and take a good rest this afternoon."

"Well," said Mrs. Hunter, with the air of one yielding a great deal, "I will submit, even though I cannot approve, on the one condition that you have nothing more to say to Mr. Clancy."

A painful flush overspread Mara's features, and she replied in a constrained voice, "You will have no occasion to worry about Mr. Clancy. After—" then remembering that Aun' Sheba was within ear-shot, she concluded, "Mr. Clancy will have nothing to say to me when he knows what is taking place. When you have thought it over you will see that my plan makes me independent of every one."

"That is, if you succeed," remarked Mrs. Hunter, "and it will be about the only thing to be said in its favor."

This degree of toleration obtained, Mara prepared to join Aun' Sheba in the kitchen, with the purpose of giving her whole thought and energy to the securing of an independence, now coveted more than ever. In spite of the influences and misapprehensions of her life which had tended to separate her from Clancy, when she fully learned that he was affiliating with those who dwelt as aliens in her thoughts, she had been overborne by his words and the promptings of her own heart. She was glad, indeed, that she had not revealed what she now regarded as her weakness, feeling that it would have complicated matters most seriously. While she had been compelled to see the folly of seclusion and inaction, the natural result of a morbid pride which blinds as well as paralyzes, she was by no means ready to accept his views or go to his lengths. She would have shared poverty with him gladly if he would continue to be "a true Southerner," in other words, one who submitted in cold and unrelenting protest to the new order of things. In accepting this new order, and in availing himself of it to advance his fortunes and those of his State as he also claimed, he alienated her in spite of all his arguments, and his avowed love. She felt that he

should take the ground with her that they had suffered too deeply, and had been wronged too greatly, to ignore the past. They were a conquered people, but so were the Poles and Alsatians. Were those subject races ready to take the hands that had struck them and still held them in thraldom? Their indignant enmity was patriotism, not hate. Now that the habitual thoughts of her life had been given time to resume their control, she felt all the more bitterly what seemed a hopeless separation. The North had not only robbed her of kindred and property, but was now taking her lover. She knew she loved him, yet not for the sake of her love would she be false to her deep-rooted feelings and convictions. If he had seen how nearly she yielded to *him*, not to his views, the previous evening, it would have been doubly hard to show him in the end that she could never share in his life, unless he adopted her attitude of passive submission to what could not be helped.

Others might do as they pleased, but their dignity and personal memories required this position, and, as she had said to him, she could take no other course without hypocrisy, revolting alike to her feelings and sense of honor. His strong words, however, combining with the circumstances of her lot, had broken the spell of her aunt's influence, and had planted in her mind the thought that any useless suffering on her part was not loyalty to the memory of her father and mother. Her new impulse was to make the most and best of her life as far as she could conscientiously; and the hope would assert itself that if she were firm he would eventually be won over to her position. "If he loves as I do," she thought, "he will be. He, no doubt, is sincere, but he has been beguiled into seeing things in the light of his immediate interests. Love to me, if it is genuine, and loyalty to the cause for which his father gave his life, should lead him to the dignified submission of the conquered and away from all association with the conquerors that can be avoided. I'll prove to him," was her mental

conclusion, accompanied with a flash of her dark eyes, "that a girl ignorant of the world and its ways, and with the help only of a former slave, can earn her bread, and thus show him how needless are his Northern allies."

Thoughts like these had been swiftly coursing through her mind while dining, and therefore, when she joined Aun' Sheba in the kitchen, she was ready to employ every faculty, sharpened to the utmost, in the tasks before her. In that humble arena, and by the prosaic method contemplated, she would assert her unsubdued spirit, and maintain a consistency which should not be marred, even at the bidding of love, by an insincere acceptance of his views and associations.

CHAPTER VIII

NEVER FORGET; NEVER FORGIVE

WHILE Aun' Sheba finished her dinner Mara began to open and put in their places the slender materials which she had purchased as her first step toward self-support. The generous meal, and especially the coffee combining with the strong incentive of her purpose, gave elasticity to her step and flushed her face slightly with color. The old aunty watched her curiously and sympathetically as she thought, "Bress her heart how purty she am, bendin' heah an' dar like a willow an' lookin' de lady ebery inch while she doin' kitchen work! Quar pahner fer sech an ole woman as me ter hab, but I dun declar dat her han's, ef dey am little, seem po'ful smart. Dey takes hole on tings jes' as if dey'd coax 'em right along whar she wants dem!" Then she broke out, "Wot a fool dat Owen Clancy am!"

Mara started and was suddenly busy in a distant part of the room. "I reckon you are the only one that thinks so, Aun' Sheba," she remarked quietly.

"Ef he could see you now he'd tink so hisself."

"Very likely," and there was a little bitterness in Mara's accent.

"De mo' fool he be den," said Aun' Sheba with an indignant toss of her head. "Whar ud his eyes be ef he could see you and not go down on his marrow-bones, I'd like to know? Habn't I seen all de quality ob dis town? and dat fer de new quality," with a snap of her fingers, "an you take de shine off'n dem all eben in de kitchen. Law sakes, what kin' ob blood dat man Clancy hab to lebe you kase

you po'? Pears ter me de ole cun'l, his fader, ud be orful figety in his coffin."

"Mr. Clancy has not left me because I am poor, Aun' Sheba," said Mara gravely. "You do him great injustice. We are not so good friends as we were simply because we cannot agree on certain subjects. But I would rather you would not talk about him to me or to any one else. Come now, you must give me some lessons in your mystery of making cakes that melt in one's mouth. Otherwise people will say you are growing old and losing your high art."

"Dey better not tell me no sech lies. Law, Missy, you is gwine ter beat me all holler wen onst you gits de hang ob de work. You little white han's gib fancy teches dat ain't in my big black han'. Arter all, tain't de han's; it's de min'. Dere's my darter Mis Watson. Neber could larn her much mo'n plain cookin'. Dere's a knack at dese tings dat's bawn in one. It's wot you granpa used ter call genus, an' you allus hab it, eben when you was a chile an' want ter muss in de kitchen."

Thus full of reminiscence and philosophy eminently satisfactory to her own mind, Aun' Sheba taught her apt and eager pupil the secrets of her craft. Mara was up with the dawn on the following day, and achieved fair success. Other lessons followed, and it was not very long before the girl passed beyond the imitative stage and began to reason upon the principles involved in her work and then to experiment.

One day an old customer said to Aun' Sheba: "There's a new hand at the bellows."

"Dunno not'n 'bout bellus. Ain't de cakes right?"

"Well, then, you've got some new receipts."

"Like a'nuff I hab," said the vender warily. "De pint am, howsumeber, isn't de cakes good?"

"Yes, they seem better every day, but they are not the same every day. I reckon some one's coaching you."

"Law sakes, Massa, wo't you mean by coachin' me?"

"Do you make the cakes?" was asked pointblank.

"Now, Massa, you's gittin' too cur'us. Wot de Scripter say? Ask no questions fer conscience' sake."

"Come, come, Aun' Sheba; if you begin to wrest Scripture, I'll take pains to find you out."

She shuffled away in some trepidation and shook her head over the problem of keeping her relations with Mara secret. "Missy puttin' her min' in de cakes an' I didn't hab much min' to put in an' folks know de dif'ence," she soliloquized. Later on she was down among the cotton warehouses, and finding herself weary and warm, stopped to rest in the shade of a building. Suddenly Owen Clancy turned the corner. His brow was contracted as if in deep and not agreeable thought.

Aun' Sheba's lowered at him, for he seemed about to pass her without noticing her. The moment he became aware of her presence, however, he stopped and fixed upon her his penetrating gray eyes. His gaze was so persistent and stern that she was disconcerted, but she spoke with her accustomed assurance: "You ain't gwine ter call de perlice, is you, Mars' Clancy?" and she placed her arms akimbo on her hips.

This reference was shrewd, for it reminded him that his grievance was purely personal and one that he could not resent in her case, yet his heart was so sore with the suspicion that Mara was looking to this negress for help instead of to himself, that for the time being he detested the woman. Love is not a judicial quality, and rarely has patience with those who interfere with its success. He had hoped that eventually the pressure of poverty would turn Mara's thoughts to him, especially as he had revealed so emphatically his wish to help her disinterestedly as a friend even; but if his present fears were well grounded, he would have to admit that her heart had grown utterly cold toward him.

"Why should you think of the police, Aun' Sheba, unless you have something on your mind?" he asked, coolly removing the cover of the basket and helping himself. "You didn't make these cakes. Did you steal them?"

"Marse Clancy, what you take me fer?"

"That depends on how honest your answers are."

"I ain't 'bliged ter answer 'tall."

"Oh, you're afraid then."

"No, I ain't afeerd. Ef dey is stolen, you'se a 'ceivin ob stolen goods, fum de way dem cakes dis'pearin'."

"You're pert, Aun' Sheba."

"Oh co'se I'se peart. Hab to be spry to arn a libin' in dese yer times, but I can do it fum dem dat's fren'ly and not fum dem dat glower at me."

"Will you tell me if Miss Wallingford—"

"Marse Clancy, hab Miss Wallingford sent you word dat she want you to know 'bout her 'fairs?"

"I understand," he said almost savagely, and throwing a quarter into the basket he passed on.

There had been a tacit understanding at first that Mara's part in Aun' Sheba's traffic should not be revealed. The girl had not wholly shaken off the influence of her aunt's opposition, and she shrank with almost morbid dread from being the subject of remark even among those of her own class. The chief and controlling motive for secrecy, however, had been distrust, the fear that the undertaking would not be successful. As the days had passed this fear had been removed. Aun' Sheba did not come to make her returns until after she had taken her supper in the evening, and at about ten in the morning she reached Mara's home by an unfrequented side street. There were those, however, who had begun to notice the regularity of her visits and among them was Owen Clancy. We have also seen that the daintiness of the viands had caused surmises.

Mara had become preoccupied with her success and with plans for increasing it. At first Aun' Sheba had supplemented her attempts, and her plan had been entered on so quietly and carried forward so smoothly that even Mrs. Hunter was becoming reconciled to the scheme although she tried to conceal the fact. It would be hard to find two women more ignorant of the world, or more averse to being

known by it, yet from it the unsophisticated girl now hoped to divert a little sustaining rill of currency without a ripple of general comment until the hour should come when she could reveal the truth to Clancy as a rebuke to his course and as a suggestion that a man might do more and yet not compromise himself. Full of these thoughts and hopes, her life, if not happy, had at least ceased to stagnate and was growing in zest and interest.

The day on which occurred the events just narrated was destined to prove a fateful one. When Aun' Sheba came in the evening it was soon evident that she had something on her mind. She paid little heed to the accounts while Mara was writing them down and explaining the margin of profit, as the girl was always careful to do, for it satisfied her conscience that her over-loyal partner was prospering now as truly as before. After everything had been attended to and the programme arranged for the morning, Aun' Sheba still sat and fidgeted in her chair. Mara leaned back in hers and looking across the kitchen table said: "Be honest now. There's something you want to say."

"Don't want ter say it, but s'pose I ought."

"I reckon you had, Aun' Sheba."

The woman's native shrewdness had been sharpened by the varied experience of her calling, and she had become convinced that the policy of secrecy would be a failure. What would be Mara's course when compelled to face the truth, was the question that troubled her. The kind soul hoped that it would make no difference, and proposed to use all her tact to induce the girl to continue her enterprise openly, believing that this course would be best for several reasons. She had the wit to know that Mara would yield far more out of consideration for her than for any thought of self, so she said as a masterpiece of strategy, "Marse Clancy ax me to-day if I stole de cakes."

"What," cried Mara, flushing hotly.

"Jes dat—ef I stole de cakes; an' anoder man say I was gittin' new reseets or dat somebody was coachin' me, what-

eber dat is. Den he put it right straight, 'Did you make 'em?' "

"Oh, Aun' Sheba, I've thoughtlessly been causing trouble. I should have continued to make the cakes just as you did, and it was only to divert my mind that I tried other ways. I won't do so any more."

"Dunno 'bout dat, honey."

"Indeed I will not when I promise you."

"I doesn't want any sech a promise. De folks like de new-fangle' cakes betteh, an' gwine back to de ole way wouldn't do no good. It's all boun'ter come out dat I'se sellin' fer you as well as fer me. Marse Clancy axed ef you wasn't, leastways he 'gan to ax when I shut him up."

"How did you shut him up?" said Mara, breathing quickly.

"By axin' him anoder question. Yah, yah, I'se Yankee 'nuff fer dat. I say, 'Hab Miss Wallingford sen' you word dat she want you to know 'bout her 'fairs'?"

"Didn't he say anything after that?"

"Yes, he say 'I understand,' an' I 'spect he do, fer he drap a quarter in my basket an' look as if he was po'ful mad as he walk away. He better min' his own business."

Mara understood Clancy and Aun' Sheba did not. The young girl was troubled and perplexed, for she could not but see in her lover's mind the effect of her step. She felt that it was natural he should be hurt and even angered to learn that, after all he had offered to do for her, she should avail herself of Aun' Sheba's services instead of his. What she feared most was that he would take it as final evidence that she was hostile to him personally and not merely estranged because he would not conform his views and life to her own. Her secret and dearest purpose, that of teaching him that he could live without compromise as she could, might be defeated. What if the very act should lead to the belief that she no longer wished to have any part in his life? A girl cannot feel that same toward a man who has told her openly of his love, for such words break down the barriers

of maidenly reserve even in her own self-communings. Since he had spoken so plainly she could think more plainly. She knew well how mistaken Aun' Sheba was in her judgment, but could not explain that Clancy felt he was not only rejected as a lover but had been ignored even as a helpful friend; and her own love taught her to gauge the bitterness of this apparent truth.

She soon became conscious that Aun' Sheba was watching her troubled face, and to hide her deeper thoughts she said, "Yes, I suppose it is all bound to come out. Well, let it. You shall not be misjudged."

"Law sake, Missy, wot does I keer! De ting dat trouble me is dat you'se gwine to keer too much. I doan want you to gib up and I doan want you to be flustered ef you fin' it's known. De pa'hnership, as you call 'im, been doin' you a heap o' good. You'se min' been gettin' int'usted an' you fo'gits you'se troubles. Dat's wot pleases me. Now to my po' sense, folks is a heap betteh off, takin' keer ob dem selves, dan wen dey worry 'bout wat dis one say an' dat one do. Dere is lots ob folks dat'll talk 'bout you a month dat won't lif' dere finger for you a minit. An' wat can dey say, honey, dat'll harm you? You prouder'n all ob dem, but you got dis kin' ob pride. Ef de rent fall due you fight again eben you'se ole nuss payin' it. Talk's only breff, but an empty pocket mean an orful lot ob trouble to folks who ain't willin' to take out ob dere pocket wat dey didn't put dere."

"Yes, Aun' Sheba, I think it would be the worst kind of trouble."

"I know it ud be fer you, but dar's Unc. He'd like his pocket filled ebery day an' he wouldn't keer who filled it ef he could spend. He'd say de Lawd pervided. Unc.'d rather trust de Lawd dan work any day."

"I am afraid you are not very religious," said Mara, smiling.

"Well, I of'n wonder wedder I'se 'ligious or no," resumed Aun' Sheba, introspectively. "Some sarmons and

prars seem like bread made out ob bran, de bigger de loaf de wuss it is. Unc. says I'se very cole an backsliden, but I'd be a heap colder ef I didn't keep up de wood-pile.

"And you help others keep up their wood-piles."

"Well, I reckon I does, but dere ain't much 'ligion in dat. Dat's kin' ob human natur which de preacher say am bad, bery bad stuff. De Lawd knows I say my prars sho't so as to be up an' doin'. Anyhow I doan belebe he likes ter be hollered at so, as dey do in our meetin' an' Unc. says dat sech talk am 'phemous. But dat ain't heah nor dar. We'se gwine right along, honey, ain't we? We'se gwine ter min' our own business jes' as if we'se the bigges' pahners in de town?"

"Yes, Aun' Sheba, you can say what you please hereafter, and I want you to come and go openly. I should have taken the stand before and saved you from coming out evenings. It has been far more on Aunty's account than on my own."

"Well, honey, now my min's at res' an' I belebe we do po'ful lot ob trade. Dat orful human natur gwine to come in now an' I belebe dat folks who know you an' all 'bout you'se family will help you, 'stid ob talkin' agin you. You see. You knows I doan' mean no disrespec' to ole Missus, but she'd jes sit down an' starbe, tinkin' ob de good dinners she orter hab, an' did hab in de ole times. All you'se folks in hebin is a smilin' on you, honey. Dey is, fer I feels it in my bones. You'se got de co'age ob you pa an' granpa an' dey know, jes' as we knows, dat ole Missus take a heap mo' comfort grumblin' dan in bein' hungry."

"Oh, Aun' Sheba, do you truly think they know about my present life?" the girl asked, with wet eyes.

"Dat's a bery deep question, honey, but it kin' a seem reason'ble ter me dat wen you gettin' on well an' wen you doin' good to some po' soul de Lawd'll sen' an angel to tell 'em. Wen dey ain't hearin' notin' I spects dey's got to tink as we does dat no news is good news."

The girl was deeply moved, for the vernacular of her old

nurse had been familiar from childhood and did not detract from the sacred themes suggested. "Oh, that I could have seen my father," she sighed. "Portraits are so unsatisfying. Tell me again just how he looked."

"He'd be proud ob you, honey, an' you kin be proud ob him. You hab his eyes, only you'se is bigger and of'n look as if you'se sorrowin' way down in you soul. Sometimes, eben wen you was a baby, you'd look so long an' fixed wid you big sad eyes as if you seed it all an' know'd it all dat I used to boo-hoo right out. Nuder times I'd be skeered, fer you'd reach out you'se little arms as ef you seed you'se moder an' wanted to go to her. De Lawd know bes' why he let such folks die. She was like a passion vine creepin' up de oak —all tender and clingin' an' lubin', wid tears in her blue eyes ebin wen he pettin' her, an' he was tall an' straight an' strong wid eyes dat laffed or flashed jes as de 'casion was. I kin see him now come marchin' down Meetin' Street at de head ob his men, all raised hisself. He walk straight as an arrow wid his sword flashin' in de sunshine an' a hundred men step tromp, tromp, arter him as ef dey proud to follow. Missy Mary stood on de balc'ny lookin' wid all her vi'let eyes an' wabin' her hank'chief. Oh, how purty she look! de roses in her cheek, her bref comin' quick, bosom risin' an' fallin', an' she a-tremblin' an' alibe all ober wid excitement an' pride an' lub. Wen he right afore de balc'ny his voice rung out like a trumpet, 'Right 'bout, face. 'Sent arms.' I dun declar dat 'fore we could wink dey was all in line frontin' us wid dere guns held out. Den he s'lute her wid his sword an' she take a red rose fum her bosom an' trow it to him an' he pick it up an' put it to his lips; den it was 'Right 'bout! March!' an' away dey went tromp, tromp, towa'ds de Bat'ry. I kin see it all. I kin see it all. O Lawd, Lawd, dey's all dead," and she rocked back and forth, wiping her eyes with her apron.

Mara sprang up, her streaming tears dried by the hotness of her indignation as she cried, "And I too can see him, with his little band, dashing against almost an army

and then trodden in the soil he died to defend. No, no, Owen Clancy, never!"

"Ah," said a low stern voice, "that's the true spirit. Now, Mara, you are your father's child. Never forget; never forgive," and they saw that Mrs. Hunter stood with them in the dim kitchen.

"Dunno 'bout dat, Missus. Reckon de wah am ober, an' what we gwine ter do wid de Lawd's prar? Dar, dar, honey, 'pose you'se nerves. 'Taint bes' to tink too much ob de ole times, an' I mustn't talk to you so no mo'."

CHAPTER IX

A NEW SOLACE

ON her way home Aun' Sheba shook her head more than once in perplexity and disapprobation over what she had heard. She had the freedom of speech of an old family servant who had never been harshly repressed even when a slave, and now was added the fearlessness of a free woman. Her affection for Mara was so strong that in her ignorance she shared in some of the girl's prejudices against the North, but not in her antipathy. The thought that Clancy had waned in his regard or that he could even think of a Northern girl after having "kep' company" with Mara, had been exasperating, but now Aun' Sheba began to suspect that the estrangement was not wholly his fault. "She set agin him by his gwine Norf an' his habin' to do wid de folks dat she an' ole Missus hates. Doan see why he is mad at me 'bout it. Reckon he's mad anyhow an' can't speak peac'ble to nobody. Well, I likes him a heap betteh in dat view ob de case an' he kin glower at me all he please 'long as he ain't 'sertin' young Missy case she is po'. Couldn't stan' dat no how. He's willin' an' she ain't, an' dat wat she mean by sayin' 'No, Owen Clancy, nebbeh.' She won't lis'n to him kase he doan hate de Norf like pizen. Now dat is foolishness, an' she's sot up to it by de ole Missus. De Norf does as well as it know how. To be sure, it ain't quality like young Missy, but it buy de cotton an' it got de po'r. Wat's mo', it gib me a chance to wuck fer mysef. I would do as much fer young Missy as eber. I'd wuck my fingers

off fer her, but I likes ter do it like white folks, kase I lub her. She orten' be so hard on young Clancy. He got his way ter make and dere'd be no good in his buttin' his head agin a wall. Tings am as dey is, an' I'm glad dey is as dey am. Dey's a long sight betteh fer cullud folks and white folks too, ef dey's a min' ter pull wid de curren' sted ob agin it. Massa Clancy's no fool. He know dis. He los' his pa an his prop'ty too, but he know betteh dan to go on hatin' fereber. Dey can't spec' me to uphole dem in dis fer it agin de Scripter an' my feelin's. Ole Missus bery 'ligious. She dun fergit wat de words mean she say ebry Sunday But den, wot de use ob callin' ole Missus to 'count. She neber could see ony her side ob de question. It don make any dif'ence to her how many widers dere is in de Norf an' she hab jes dinged her 'pinions inter young Missy eber sence she was bawn. I'se glad ter do fer dem long as I lib, but I'se gwine ter speak my min' too."

With such surmises and self-communings she reached her home and found Uncle Sheba asleep in his chair and the fire out. She nodded at him ominously and muttered, "I gib him anuder lesson." Slipping quietly into the bedroom, she bolted the door, and, unrelenting to all remonstrances left him to get through the night as well as he could in his chair. The result justified the wisdom of the means employed, for thereafter Uncle Sheba always had a good fire when she returned.

Aun' Sheba had correctly interpreted the ellipsis suggested by Mara's passionate utterance. The scenes called up by her old nurse's words and rendered vivid by a strong imagination again presented themselves as an impassable barrier between herself and her lover unless he should feel their significance as she did. As a woman her heart was always pleading for him, but when strongly excited by the story of the past her anger flamed that he should even imagine that she would continue her regard for him. Indeed she wondered and was almost enraged at herself that she could not at once blot out his image and dismiss him from

her thoughts when he was taking the course of all others most repugnant to her. At such moments she could easily believe that all was over between them, but with quiet persistence her heart knew better, and preferred love to enmities and sad memories.

Moreover, passionate as had been her mood there was a hard, homely common-sense in her old nurse's words, "Reckon de wah's ober an' wat you gwine ter do wid de Lawd's prar?" that quenched her fire like cold water. No one can be in a false position, out of harmony with normal laws and principles, without meeting spiritual jars. Mara was too young and too intelligent not to recognize the difficulties in maintaining her position, but she believed sincerely that the circumstances of her lot justified this position and made it the only honorable one for her. Northerners were to her what the Philistines were to the ancient Hebrews, the hereditary foes from which she had suffered the chief ills of her life. To compromise with them was to compromise with evil, and therefore she was always able to reason away the significance of all words like those of Aun' Sheba, although for the moment they troubled her.

Mrs. Hunter, however, had long since been incapable of doubts or compunctions. She tolerated Aun' Sheba's outspokenness as she would that of a child or a slave babbling of matters far above her comprehension.

The day marked a change in Mara's policy and action, and these led to some very important experiences. A false pride had at first prompted, or at least induced her to acquiesce in secrecy; now an honest pride led her to openness in all her efforts to obtain a livelihood. She would volunteer no information, but would simply go on in an unhesitating manner, let the consequences be what they might.

They soon began to take a surprisingly agreeable form, for the quick warm sympathies of the Southern people were touched. Here was a young girl, the representative of one of the oldest and best families, seeking quietly and unostentatiously to support herself and her aged aunt. There had

been scores of people who would gladly have offered her assistance, but they had respected her reticence in regard to her affairs as jealously as they guarded the condition of their own. Frank in the extreme with each other in most respects, there was an impoverished class in the city who would suffer much rather than reveal pecuniary need or accept the slightest approach to charity. Poverty was no reproach among these families that had once enjoyed wealth in abundance. Indeed it was rather like a badge of honor, for it indicated sacrifice for the "lost cause" and an unreadiness for thrifty compacts and dealings with those hostile to that cause. In the class to which Mara belonged, therefore, she gained rather than lost in social consideration, and especial pains were taken to assure her of this fact.

Those in whose veins, even in Mrs. Hunter's estimation, flowed the oldest and bluest blood, called more frequently and spoke words of cheer and encouragement. That good lady, in a rich but antiquated gown, received the guests and was voluble in Mara's praises and in lamentation over the wrongs of the past. The majority were sympathetic listeners, but all were glad that the girl could do and was willing to do something more than complain. To their credit it should be said that they were ready to do more than sympathize, for even the most straitened found that they could spare something for Mara's cake, and Aun' Shea's basket began to be emptied more than once every day. Orders were given also, and the young girl had all she could do to keep up with the growing demand.

It was well for her that each day brought its regular work, and its close found her too weary for the brooding so often the bane of idleness. Yet, in spite of all that was encouraging, the cheering words spoken to her, the elation of Aun' Sheba and the excitement resulting from her humble prosperity, she was ever conscious of a dull ache at heart. Clancy had gone North for an indefinite absence, and it looked as if their separation were final. In vain she assured herself that it was best that they should not meet

again until both were satisfied that their paths led apart. She knew that she had hoped his path would come back to hers—that in secret she hoped this still, with a pathetic persistence which defied all effort. She believed, however, that such effort was her best resource, for he was again under the influences she most feared and detested. At times she reproached herself for having been too reserved, too proud and passionate in her resentment at his course. He had asked her to convince him of his error if she could, and she had not only failed to make such effort, but also had denied him the hope that would have been more than all argument. Thus, at variance with her heart, she alternated between the two extremes of anger at his course and regret and compunction at her own. As a rule, though, her resolute will enabled her to concentrate her thoughts on daily occupations and immediate interests, and it became her chief aim to so occupy herself with these interests that no time should be left for thoughts which now only tended to distress and discourage.

Mara was a girl who consciously would be controlled by a few simple motives rather than by impulses, circumstances or the influence of others. We have seen that loyalty, as she understood it, was her chief motive. Her love for parents she had never seen was profound, and all relating to them was sacred. To do what she believed would be pleasing to them, what would now reflect honor upon their memory, was her supreme duty. All other motives would be dominated by this pre-eminent one and all action guided by it. She felt that the effort to provide for her aunt, the one remaining member of her family, and to enable her to spend her remaining days in the congenial atmosphere of the past, would certainly be in accord with her parents' wishes. Then by natural sequence her sympathies went out to those whose fortunes, like her own, had been wrecked by the changes against which they could interpose only a helpless protest. In various ways she learned of those of her own class who had been disabled and impoverished, whose lives were

stripped of the embroidery of pleasant little gratifications only permitted by a surplus of income. It gradually came to be a cherished solace after the labors of the morning, to carry to the sick and afflicted, dwelling in homes of faded gentility like her own, some delicacy made by her own hands. While these were received in the spirit in which they were brought, the girl's lovely, sympathetic face was far more welcome, and the orphan began to embody to those of the old régime the cause for which they all had suffered so much. Within this limited circle Mara was kindness and gentleness itself, beyond it cold and unapproachable. Occasionally some, with whom she had no sympathy, sought to patronize her. They intimated that they were willing to buy lavishily, but it was also evident that they wished their good-will appeciated and reciprocated in ways that excited the girl's scorn. In spite of her poverty and homely work, it was known that she was a favorite in the most aristocratic circle in the city, and there are always those ready to seek social recognition in many and devious ways. These pushing people represented to Mara the Northern element and leaven in the city, and she soon made it clear that there was an invisible line beyond which they could not pass. Their orders were either declined or scrupulously filled, if her time permitted, but with a quiet tact which was inflexible she warded off every approach which was not purely commercial.

CHAPTER X

MISS AINSLEY

WHILE in New York, Owen Clancy had been kept informed of the drift of those events in which he was especially interested. While Mara's effort had increased his admiration for her, its success had still further discouraged his hope. In his way he was as proud as she was. He had committed himself to a totally different line of action, for in his business relations he had been led into friendly relations with many Northern people in both cities. He had accepted and returned their hospitalities in kind as far as it was possible for a young bachelor of modest means. This courtesy had been expected and accepted as a matter of course, and to exchange it for cold, freezing politeness limited only to matters of trade, would not only subject him to ridicule but cut short his business career. Considerations supreme in Mara's circle were ignored by the great world, and, having once felt the impulses of the large currents of life, it would be impossible for Clancy to withdraw into the little side eddy wherein thought was ever turning back to no purpose. Having clasped hands and broken bread with the men and women of the North, he felt that he could not, and would not stultify himself, even for the sake of his love, by any change toward them. They would despise him not only as a miracle of narrowness but also as an insincere man, whose courtesy had been but business policy, easily dropped at the bidding of some more pressing interest.

His last interview with Mara had depressed him exceed-

ingly, for while it had increased his love it had also revealed to him the radical divergence in their views and made it more clear that he could only hope to win her love by the sacrifice of self-respect. He must cease to be a thinking, independent man, a part of his own day and generation, and fix his thoughts upon the dead issues of the past. "The idea," he would mutter, "of sitting down and listening to Mrs. Hunter's inane and endless lament." He could not conform to Mara's views without being guilty of hypocrisy also, and she proved her narrowness by not recognizing this truth.

After all, the point of view was chiefly the cause of the trouble between them. She had ever dwelt in the shaded valley; he had been on the mountain-top, and so had secured a broad range of vision. He had come into contact with the great forces which were making the future and the men of the future, and he recognized that his own State and his own people must be vitalized by these forces or else be left far behind. And he represented a large and increasing class in his native city. In birth and breeding he was the peer of Mara or any of her aristocratic circle. He had admission to the best society in the State, and, if looked upon coldly by some, it was for the same reasons which actuated the girl for whom he would gladly yield everything except his principles and right of private judgment.

While he had many warm, sympathetic friends he felt that the old should give way to the new, he yet ran against the prejudices which Mara embodied so often that he began to feel ill at ease in Charleston.

He thought of removing permanently to cosmopolitan New York more than once during his absence North. If he should be fully convinced after his return that Mara was lost to him, unless he became a part of her implacable and reactionary coterie, it might be better for his peace of mind that he were far away.

One evening, before his departure home, he was invited to dine with a gentleman who had large railroad interests in

the South. Mr. Ainsley was a widower, a man of wealth, and absorbed in the pleasure of its increase. He had made a business acquaintance with Clancy, and, finding him unusually intelligent and well informed in regard to Southern matters, naturally wished to converse more at length with him. The cordial invitation, the hearty welcome of the Northern capitalist could scarcely fail in gratifying the young Southerner, who keenly felt the importance of interesting just such men as his host in the enterprises under consideration. During the preliminary talk in the library of his palatial home, Mr. Ainsley soon discovered that his guest was not only well informed but frank and honest in statements, giving the cons as well as the pros, in spite of an evident desire to secure for the South all the advantages possible.

Before going to the dining-room, Miss Caroline, his host's only daughter, entered the library and was presented. Clancy was fairly dazzled by her remarkable beauty. She was a blonde of the unusual type characterized by dark eyes and golden hair. Naturally, therefore, the first impression of beauty was vivid, nor was it banished by closer observation. As she presided with ease and grace at her father's table, Clancy found himself fascinated as he had never been before by a stranger.

Although their table-talk lost its distinctively business and statistical character, Mr. Ainsley still pursued his inquiries in a broad, general way, and the daughter also asked questions in regard to life and society at the South which indicated a personal interest on her part.

At last she said, "Papa thinks it quite possible that we may spend some time in your region, and in that case we should probably make Charleston our headquarters. I have a friend, Mrs. Willoughby—do you know her?"

"Yes, indeed; a charming lady. She resides on the Battery."

"I'm glad you know her. I met her abroad, and we became very fond of each other. She has often asked me

to visit her, but as I rarely leave Papa, the way has never opened."

"My daughter is very good in accompanying me in my various business expeditions," her father explained, "and you know they do not often lead to fashionable watering-places, nor can they always be adjusted to such seasons as I could desire. I wish I could go to Charleston at an early date, but in view of other interests, I cannot tell when I can get away."

"When I do come, I shall make the most of my name and insist on being regarded as a Carolinian," said Miss Ainsley, laughing.

Clancy was pleased with the conceit and the delicate compliment implied, but he was already impressed with the idea that his hostess was the most cosmopolitan girl that he had ever met. She piqued his curiosity, and he led her to talk of her experiences abroad. Apparently she had been as much at home in Europe as in America, and had been received in the highest social circles everywhere. When after dinner she played for him some brilliant, difficult classical music, he began to regard her a perfect flower of metropolitan culture. Yet she perplexed him. She revealed so much about herself without the slightest hesitation, yet at the same time seemed to veil herself completely. He and her father could broach no topic of conversation in which she could not take an intelligent part. Matters of European policy were touched upon, and she was at home in regard to them. She smiled broadly when he tried to explain to her father that patience would still be required with the South, but that in time the two parts of the country would be more firmly welded together than ever. "Such antipathies amuse me," she said. "It is one side keeping up a quarrel which the other has forgotten all about."

"The circumstances are different, Miss Ainsley," Clancy replied. "The war cost me my father, my property, and impoverished my State."

He could not tell whether her eyes expressed sympathy or not, for they had beamed on him with a soft alluring fire from the first, but her father spoke up warmly: "The North has not forgotten, especially the older generation. We have not suffered materially and have become absorbed in new interests, but the heart of the North was wounded as truly as that of the South. I wish to assure you, Mr. Clancy, how deeply I sympathize with and honor your spirit of conciliation. What is there for us all but to be Americans? Believe me, sir, such men as yourself are the strength and hope of your section."

"I believe with you, Mr. Ainsley, that it has been settled that we are to have but one destiny as a nation, but in justice to my people I must say that our wounds were so deep and the changes involved so vast that it is but reasonable we should recover slowly. You may say that we committed errors during the reconstruction period, yet they were errors natural to a conquered people. In the censure we have received from many quarters we have been almost denied the right to our common human nature. Possibly the North, in our position would not have acted very differently. But the past *is* past, and the question is now, what is right and wise? I know that I represent a strong and growing sentiment which desires the unity and prosperity of the entire country. I in turn, sir, can say that men like yourself, in coming among us and investing their money do more than all politicians in increasing this sentiment. It proves that you trust us; and trust begets trust and good feeling. The North, however, will always be mistaken if it expects us to denounce our fathers or cease to honor the men who fought and prayed for what they believed was right."

"Suppose, Mr. Clancy," Miss Ainsley asked, with mirthful eyes, "that a party in the South had the power to array your section against the North again, would you go with your section?"

"Oh, come, Carrie, it is scarcely fair to ask tests on ut-

terly improbable suppositions," said her father laughing, yet he awaited Clancy's answer with interest.

"No," he said quietly, "not with the light I now possess. I would have done so five years ago. Are Northern young men so intrinsically wise and good that they are not influenced by their traditions and immediate associations?"

"Mr. Clancy, where are your eyes? Go to the Delmonico café at noon to-morrow, and observe the flower of our patrician youth taking their breakfast. You will see beings who are intrinsically what they are."

"I fear we are rather even in this respect," said Clancy, laughing. "You have your metropolitan dudes and manikins, and we our rural ruffians, slaves of prejudice, who hate progress, schools and immigration, as they do soap and water. There is some consideration for our fellows, however, for they scarcely know any better, and many of their characteristics are bred in the bone. It would almost seem that the class you refer to are fools and nonentities from choice."

"I fear not," she said, lifting her eyebrows. "If I were a medical student I should be tempted to kill one of them—it wouldn't be murder—to see if he had a brain."

"You think brain, then, is absolutely essential?"

"Yes, indeed. I could endure a man without a heart, but not if he were a fool. If a man is not capable of thinking himself into what is sensible he is a poor creature."

Clancy shrugged his shoulders in slight protest and soon after took his leave, having first acquiesced in an appointment with Mr. Ainsley at his office in the morning.

On the way to his hotel and until late into the night, he thought over his experiences of the evening. Did Miss Ainsley intend to compliment him by suggesting that he was thinking himself into what was sensible? It was difficult to tell what she intended as far as he was concerned. "She could only have the most transient interest in such a stranger as I am," he reasoned, "yet her eyes were like magnets. They both fascinate and awaken misgivings.

Perhaps they are the means by which she discovers whether a man is a fool or not; if he speedily loses his head under their spells, she mentally concludes, weighs and finds wanting. Probably, however, like hosts of pretty women, she simply enjoys using her powers and seeing men succumb; and men not forearmed and steeled as I am, might well hesitate to see her often, for my impression is right strong that she has more brain than heart. Yet she is a dazzling creature. Jove, what a contrast to Mara! Yet there is a nobility and womanly sincerity in Mara's expression than I cannot discover in Miss Ainsley's face. However wrong Mara may be, you are sure she is sincere and that she would be true to her conscience even if she put the whole North to the sword; but this brilliant girl—how much conscience and heart has she? Back of all her culture and accomplishments there is a woman; yet what kind of a woman? Well, the prospects are that I may have a chance to find out when she comes South. One thing is certain, she will not discover that I am a fool by speedily kindling a vain sentiment. Yet I would like to find her out, to discover the moral texture of her being. A girl like Miss Ainsley could more than fulfil a man's ideal or else make his life a terror."

He called again just before his departure, and saw her alone. As at first, she appeared to veil the woman in her nature completely, while, at the same time, the mild lightning of her eyes played about him.

Although consciously on his guard he found himself fascinated in spite of himself by her marvellous beauty, and his curiosity piqued more than ever. He discovered that her range of reading was wide, especially in modern European literature, and he was charmed by her broad, liberal views. Perhaps it was because he was singularly free from egotism that he was so conscious of her fine reticence which took the mask of apparent frankness. Most men would have been flattered by her seeming interest in them and willingness to listen to all they had to say about them-

selves. According to Clancy's opinion, conversation should be an equal interchange. He looked direct into Miss Ainsley's eyes. They bewildered and perplexed him, for they appeared to gather the rays of some light he did not understand and focus them upon himself. He wished he could see her in the society of other men and could learn more of her antecedents so that he might better account for her, but he went away feeling that she was more of an enigma than ever.

The glamour of her perplexing personality was upon him during much of his journey, but as he approached his native city thoughts of Mara predominated. Was she utterly estranged, and was the secret of her coldness due to the truth that he had never had any real hold upon her heart? If Mrs. Hunter had not so harshly interposed at the critical moment of their last interview, he believed that he would have discovered why it was she said he was "breaking her heart." Was it because he charged her with disloyalty to her kindred? Or had his own course which she felt was separating them some part in her distress? The fact that she had been silent to his last appeal, that she had proved his fears in regard to her poverty to be true, yet had sought aid from such an unexpected source, rather than permit him to endow her with his love and all that it involved, forced him to the miserable conclusion that she had at least decided against him.

But hope dies hard in a lover's breast. He longed to see her again, yet how could he see her except in the presence of others?

He knew they soon would meet; he was determined that they should; and possibly something in her involuntary manner or expression might suggest that she had thought of his words in his absence.

She had thought of his words as we know, but she had also been given other food for reflection which the following chapter will reveal.

CHAPTER XI

TWO QUESTIONS

IN the division of labor between Mara and her aunt, the latter, with the assistance of their landlady's daughter, tried to leave the young girl few tasks beyond that of filling Aun' Sheba's basket.

Mrs. Hunter was also expected to be ready to receive callers, and excuse Mara during the morning hours. Under the new order of things, more people dropped in than in former times, for, as we have seen, it had become a kindly fashion to show good-will. The caller on a certain morning in April was not wholly actuated by sympathy, for she had news which she believed would be interesting if not altogether agreeable. Clancy's attentions had not been unknown, and he had at first suffered in the estimation of others as well as of Aun' Sheba, because of his apparent neglect. The impression, however, had been growing, that Mara had withdrawn her favor on account of his friendly relations with Northern people and his readiness to bury the past. The morning visitor had not only learned of a new proof of his objectionable tendencies, but also—so do stories grow as they travel—that he was paying attention to a New York belle and heiress. Mrs. Hunter was soon possessed of these momentous rumors, and when, at last, weary from her morning labors, Mara sat down to their simple dinner, she saw that her aunt was preternaturally solemn and dignified. The girl expressed no curiosity, for she knew that whatever burdened her aunt's mind would soon be revealed with endless detail and comment.

"Well," ejaculated Mrs. Hunter at last, "my impres-

sions concerning people are usually correct, and it is well for you that they are. If it had not been for me you might have become entangled in association with a man false and disloyal in all respects. I say entangled in association, resulting from a moment of weakness, for assuredly the instant you gained self-possession and had time for thought, you would have repudiated everything. I saved you from the embarrassment of all this, and now you can realize how important was the service I rendered. I have heard of the performances of Mr. Clancy at the North."

The hot flush on Mara's cheeks followed by pallor proved that her indifference had been thoroughly banished, but she only looked at her aunt like one ready for a blow.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Hunter, "the story has come very straight—straight from that young Mrs. Willoughby, who, with her husband, seems as ready to forget and condone all that the South has suffered as your devoted admirer himself. Devoted indeed! He is now paying his devotions at another shrine. A Northern girl with her Northern gold is the next and natural step in his career, and he said to her pointblank that if the South again sought to regain her liberty, he would not help. He wasn't a Samson, but he was not long in being shorn by a Northern Delilah of what little strength he had."

"How do you know that this is true?" asked Mara rigid, with suppressed feeling.

"Oh, Mrs. Willoughby must talk if the heavens fell. It seems that she met this Northern girl abroad, and that they have become great friends. She has received a letter, and it is quite probable that this girl will come here. It would be just like her to follow up her new admirer. Mrs. Willoughby is so hot in her advocacy of what she terms the 'New South,' that she must speak of everything which seems to favor her pestilential ideas. By birth she belongs to the Old South and the only true South, and she tries to keep in with it, but she is getting the cold shoulder from more than one."

Mara said nothing, but her brow contracted.

"You take it very quietly," remarked her aunt severely.

"Yes," said Mara.

"Well, if I were in your place I would be on fire with indignation."

"Perhaps I would be if I did not care very much," was the girl's constrained answer.

"I do not see how you can care except as I do."

"You are you, aunty, and I am myself. People are not all made exactly alike."

"But a girl should have some self-respect."

"Yes, aunty, and she should be respected. I am one to show my self-respect by deeds, not words. You must not lecture me any more now as if I were a child," and she rose and left her almost untasted dinner.

A little thought soon satisfied Mrs. Hunter that the iron had entered deep into the soul of her niece, and that her deeds would be satisfactory. She therefore finished her dinner complacently.

Mara felt that she had obtained a test which might justly compel the giving up of her dream of love forever. She was endowed with a simplicity and sincerity of mind which prompted to definite actions and conclusions, rather than to the tumultuous emotions of anger, jealousy and doubt. She would not doubt; she would know. Either Clancy had been misrepresented or he had not been, and he had seemed so true and frank in his words to her that she would not condemn him on the story of a gossip. From her point of view she concluded that if he had gone so far as to say to a Northern girl that he would not join the South in an effort to achieve independence, supposing such an attempt to be made, then he had passed beyond the pale of even her secret sympathy and regard, no matter what the girl might become to him. She scarcely even hoped that there would ever be a chance for him to make such a choice of sides as his reputed words indicated, but he could contemplate the possibility, and if he could even think, in such an imagined

exigency, of remaining aloof from the cause for which his and her own father had died, then he would be dismissed from her thoughts as utterly unworthy.

So she believed during the unhappy hours of the afternoon which were robbed of all power to bring rest. She determined, if it were possible, to hear the truth from his own lips. She would subdue her heart by giving it proof positive that he had either drifted or had been lured far away. If this were true—and she would not be influenced by her aunt's bitter prejudice—then it was all over between them. If once so completely convinced that he did not love her sufficiently to give up his Northern affiliations for her sake, her very pride would cast out her own stubborn love.

The opportunity to accomplish all she desired soon occurred, for later she met him at a house where a few guests had been invited to spend the evening. Social life had ceased to divide sharply upon the opinions held by different persons, and the question as to what guests should be brought together had been decided by the hostess chiefly on the ground of birth and former associations. On this occasion when Clancy's eyes met those of Mara, he bowed, and was about to cross the room in the hope of receiving something like a welcome after his absence, but he was repelled at once and chilled by her cold, slight bow, and her prompt return of attention to the gentleman with whom she was conversing.

Clancy was so hurt and perturbed that he was capable of but indifferent success in his efforts to maintain conversation with others. When supper was served he strayed into the deserted library and made a pretence of looking at some engravings. A dear and familiar voice brought a sudden flush to his face, but the words, "Mr. Clancy, I wish to speak with you," were spoken so coldly that he only turned and bowed deferentially and then offered Mara a chair.

She paid no attention to this act, and hesitated a moment in visible embarrassment before proceeding.

"Miss Wallingford," he began eagerly, "I have longed and hoped—"

She checked him by a gesture as she said, "Perhaps I would better speak first. I have a question to ask. You need not answer it of course if you do not wish to. I am not conventional in seeking this brief interview. Indeed," she added a little bitterly, "my life has ceased to be conventional in any sense, and I have chosen to conform to a few simple verities and necessities. As you once said to me, you and I have been friends, and, if I can trust your words, you have meant kindly by me—"

"Miss Wallingford, can you doubt my words," he began in low, passionate utterance, "can you doubt what I mean and have meant? You know I—"

Her brow had darkened with anger, and she interrupted him, saying, "You surely cannot think I have sought this interview in the expectation of listening to such words and tones. I have come because I wish to be just, because I will not think ill of you unless I must, because I wish you to know where I stand immovably. If my friendship is worth anything you will seek it by deeds, not words. I now only wish to ask if you said in effect, while North, that if the South should again engage in a struggle for freedom you would not help?"

Clancy was astounded, and exclaimed, "Miss Wallingford, can you even contemplate such a thing?"

Her face softened as she said, "I knew that you could never have said anything of the kind."

How tremendous was the temptation of that moment! He saw the whole truth instantaneously, that she was lost to him unless he came unreservedly to her position. In that brief moment her face had become an exquisite transparency illumined with an assurance of hope. He had an instinctive conviction that even if he admitted that he had spoken the words, yet would add, "Mara, I am won at last to accept your view of right and duty," all obstacles between them would speedily melt away.

The temptation grappled his heart with all the power of human love, and there was an instant of hesitation that was human also, and then conscience and manhood asserted themselves. With the dignity of conscious victory he said gravely, "Miss Wallingford, I have ever treated your convictions with respect even when I differed with you most. I have an equal right to my own convictions. I should be but the shadow of a man if I had no beliefs of my own. You misunderstand me. My first thought as you spoke was surprise that you could even contemplate such a thing as a renewed struggle between the North and the South."

"Certainly I could contemplate it, sir, though I can scarcely hope for it."

"I trust not; and even at the loss of what I value far more than you can ever know, I will not be false to myself nor to you. I did speak such words, and I must confirm them now."

She bowed frigidly and was turning away when he said, "I, too, perhaps have the right to ask a question."

She paused with averted face. "Can you not at least respect a man who is as sincere as you are?"

Again the vigilant Mrs. Hunter, uneasy that Mara and Clancy were not within the range of her vision, appeared upon the scene. She glared a moment at the young man, and Mara left the room without answering him.

CHAPTER XII

A "'FABULATION"

IT had been Mara's belief, indeed almost her hope, that if truth compelled Clancy to admit that he had spoken the obnoxious words he would become to her as a "heathen man and a publican." No matter how much she might suffer, she had felt that such proof of utter lack of sympathy with her and all the motives which should control him, would simplify her course and render it much easier, for she had thought that her whole nature would rise in arms against him. It would end all compunction, quench hope and even deal a fatal blow to love itself. She would not only see it her duty to banish him from her thoughts, but had scarcely thought it possible that he could continue to dwell in them.

The result had not justified her expectations, and she was baffled, exasperated and torn by conflicting feelings. Although he had admitted the words and confirmed them to her very face, he had not allowed himself to be put in a position which enabled her to turn coldly and contemptuously away. Brief as had been the interview, he had made it impossible for her to doubt two things; first, that the Northern girl was nothing to him and that he had not spoken the words to win her favor, for he had come back to herself with the same love in his eyes and the same readiness to give it expression despite her coldness and even harshness. No matter how bitterly she condemned herself, this truth thrilled and warmed her very soul. In the second place, however mistaken he might be, he had com-

pelled her to believe him to be sincere, so loyal, indeed, to his own sense of right that not even for her sake would he yield. She could not doubt this as the eagerness of the lover passed into the grave dignity and firmness of a self-respecting man. Moreover, another truth had been thrust upon her consciousness—that she was more woman than partisan. As he had stood before her, revealing his love and constancy and at the same time asserting his right to think and act in accordance with his own convictions, he had appeared noble, handsome, manly; her heart acknowledged him master, and however vigilantly she might conceal the fact, she could not deny it to herself.

Nevertheless, his course had simplified her action; it had decided her that all was over between them. The case was hopeless now; for neither could yield without becoming untrue to themselves, and there could be no happy union in such radical diversity. The less often they met the better, as he only made her course the harder to maintain and the separation more painful than it had been before.

She might hide her unhappiness, but she could not banish the resulting despondency and flagging strength. Her aunt had half forced an explanation of the reason why she was alone with Clancy, and, in hasty self-defence, she admitted a resolve to know with certainty whether he had spoken the words charged against him. When Mrs. Hunter learned that he had acknowledged the truth of the story, she spoke of him with redoubled bitterness, making it hard indeed for Mara to listen, for her heart took his side almost passionately. Unintentionally Mrs. Hunter proved herself the young man's best ally, yet Mara outwardly was compelled to acquiesce, for she herself had proved the enormity which was to end everything. Consistency, however, was torn to tatters one day, and she said in sudden passion, "Aunty, never mention Mr. Clancy's name again. I demand this as my right."

When Mara spoke in this manner Mrs. Hunter yielded. Indeed she was not a little perplexed over the girl who had

been so passive and subservient. She was not a profound reasoner upon any subject, nor could she understand how one step, even though Mara had been driven to it by hard necessity, led to many others. The girl had begun to assert her individual life, and her nature, once awakened, was proving a strong one. Deepening and widening experience perplexed and troubled her unguided mind, and prepared the way for doubtful experiments.

As before, Aun' Sheba was quick to discover that all was not well with Mara, but believed that she, like herself, was working beyond her strength. The old woman had a bad cold and was feeling "rudder po'ly" one evening when her minister came to pay a pastoral visit.

On so momentous an occasion as this, her son-in-law Kern Watson and his wife and children were summoned; a few neighbors also dropped in as they often did, for Aun' Sheba was better in their estimation than any newspaper in town. Since the necessity for much baking had been removed, she had hired out her stove in order to make more room and to enjoy the genial fire of the hearth. So far from being embarrassed because her head was tied up in red flannel, she had the complacent consciousness that she was the social centre of the group, an object of sympathy and the respected patron of all present.

The Reverend Mr. Birdsall, the minister, treated Aun' Sheba with much consideration; he justly regarded her as one of the "pillars of the church," knowing well from long experience that she abounded in liberality if not in long prayers and contentions. He was a plain, sincere, positive man who preached what he believed to be the truth. If he was sometimes beyond it, beneath it or away from it altogether, he was as serenely unconscious of the fact as were his hearers. There was no agnosticism in his congregation, for he laid down the law and the gospel in a way that discouraged theological speculation. Nevertheless, among his followers there were controversial spirits who never doubted that they were right, however much they might question his

ecclesiastical methods and views. To many, freedom meant the right to have their say, and, as is often true, those having the least weighty matter on their minds were the most ready to volunteer opinions and advice. Aun' Sheba was a doer, not a talker, in her church relations. If she occasionally dozed a little in her pew during the sermon, she was always wide awake when the plate was passed around; and if a "brother" or a "sister" were sick she found time for a visit, nor did she go empty-handed. If it were a case of back-sliding she had a homely way of talking sense to the delinquent that savored a little of worldly wisdom. There were not a few who shared in her doubt whether she was " 'ligious" or not, but the Reverend Mr. Birdsall was not of these. He would only have been too glad to have discovered more religion like hers.

"Mis' Buggone," he said, sympathetically, after Aun' Sheba had given her symptoms with much detail, "in you is a case whar de spirit is willin' but de flesh is weak. You'se been a-goin' beyon' you strengt."

"Yes, Elder, dat is de gist ob de whole business," affirmed Kern Watson. "Moder's tromped de streets wid her big basket till she is dun beat out. She's undertook mo'n her share an' is s'portin' too many people."

"Kern, you means well," said Aun' Sheba with dignity, "but you mus' not 'flect on young Missy. She am de las' one in de worl' to let a body s'port her while she fol' her han's. She's po'ly too, jes' kase she's a workin' harde'n me."

Uncle Sheba hitched uneasily in his chair, feeling that the conversation rather reflected on him, and he was conscious that old Tobe, keeper of the "rasteran," was glaring at him. "I reckin," he said, "dat de min'ster might offer a word ob prar an' comfort fore he go."

"What pressin' business," asked his wife, severely, "hab you got, Unc., dat you in sech a hurry fer de min'ster ter go? We ain't into de shank ob de ebenin' yet, an' dar's no 'casion to talk 'bout folks goin'."

"I dun said nothin' 'bout folks goin'," complained Uncle Sheba in an aggrieved tone, "I was ony a suggestin' wot 'ud be 'propriate ter de 'casion *fore* dey go."

"Mr. Buggone is right, and prar is always 'propriate," said Mr. Birdsall in order to preserve the serenity of the occasion. "Before this little company breaks up we will sing a hymn and hab a word ob prar. But we mus' use de right means in dis worl' an' conform ter de inex*or*able law ob de universe. Here's de law and dar's de gospel, and dey both have dar place. If a brick blow off a chimley it alus falls ter de groun'. Dat's one kin' ob law. Water runs down hill, dat's much de same kin' ob law. If a man hangs roun' a saloon an' wastes his time an' money, he's boun' to git seedy an' ragged an' a bad name, an' his fam'ly gets po' an' mis'ble; dat's another kin' ob law—no 'scapin' it. He's jest as sure ter run down hill as de water. Den if we git a cut or a burn or a bruise we hab pain; dat's anuder kin' ob law, an' we all know it's true. But dar's a heap ob good people, Mis' Buggone, who think dey can run dis po' machine ob a body in a way dat would wear out wrought-iron, and den pray de good Lawd ter keep it strong and iled and right up to the top-notch ob po'r. Now dat's against both law and gospel, for eben He who took de big contrac' ter save the worl' said ter his disciples, 'come ye yourselves apart and rest a while.' I reckon dat's de law and de gospel for you, Mis' Buggone, about dis time." Nods of approval were general, and Kern Watson gave the sense of the meeting in his hearty way.

"'Deed it am, Elder," he said. "You'se hit de nail squar on de head. Own up, now, moder, dat you'se neber been preached at mo' convincin'. Hi! wot a book dat Bible am! It's got a word in season fer ebry 'casion."

"Well," said Aun' Sheba, meditatively, "I wants ter be open ter de truf, an' I does own up, Kern, dat de Elder puts it monstis peart an' bery conwincin'. But," she continued argumentatively, laying the forefinger of her left hand on the broad palm of her right, "dars gen'ly two sides to a

question. Dat's whar folks git trip up so of'n—dey sees ony one side. I've 'served dat it's po'ful easy fer folks ter tell oder folks wat ter do and wat not ter do. No 'fence, Elder. You been doin' you duty, but you'se been layin' down rudder 'stended princ'ples. I know you'se got ter preach broad an' ter lay down de truf fer de hull winyard, but I wants ter know wat ter do wid my own little patch ob ground. Now here's me and dar's my young Missy 'pendin' on me."

"Dat's whar I jes' doesn't 'gree wid Aun' Sheba," put in her husband as she paused a moment for breath. He felt that public opinion was veering over to his side and might be employed to enforce his views. "It is all bery well fer one ter do all dey can 'sistently fer oders, but—"

"Mr. Buggone," remarked Aun' Sheba sternly.

Uncle Sheba subsided, and she went on, "Dere s my young Missy dat's pendin' on me, but she ain't pendin' in de sense ob hangin' on me," and she paused and looked impressively at Unc. "She's usin' her two little han's jest as hard as she know how, an' a heap too hard. Wat's mo' she's usin' dem to good puppus. I jes' declar' to you, Elder an' frens, dat since she took hole, de business am rollin' up an' it gettin' too big fer both ob us. Dat's whar de shoe pinches. I ain't loss notin'. I'se made a heap mo' by doin' fer young Missy. In dis 'fabulation, I doesn't want no 'flections on her, kase dey wouldn't be fair. Now, Kern, you'se right smart. You'se had my 'proval eber sence you took a shine ter Sissy. Ud you belebe it, Elder and frens, dat son-in-law ob mine offered ter s'port me an' me do nuffin but jes' help Sissy and look arter de chil'n. But dat ain't my way. I likes ter put my own money in my own pocket an' I likes ter take it out agin, an' it jes' warm my heart like a hick'y fiah ter help dat honey lam' ob mine dat I nussed. So you see, Elder, dat gen'l preachin' am like meal. Folks has got ter take it an' make out ob it a little hoe-cake fer dere selves. It's de same ole meal, but we's

got ter hab it in a shape dat 'plies ter our own inards, sperital and bodily."

Again there were nods of assent and sounds of approval which old Tobe put into words. "Aun' Sheba," he said, "you puts you'se 'pinions monst'us peart, too. I'se an ole man an' has had my shar ob 'sperence, an' I'se alus 'served dat de hitch come in at de 'plyin' part. Dere's a sight ob preachin' dat soun' as true an' straight as dat de sun an' rain make de cotton grow, but when you git down to de berry indewidooel cotton plant dere's ofen de debil to pay in one shape or oder. Dere's a wum at de root or a wum in de leaves, or dey's too much rain or too much sun, or de sile's like a beef bone dat's been biled fer soup mo' dan's reasonable. Now Aun' Sheba's de indewidooel cotton-plant we's a-'siderin', an' I doan see how she's gwine to res' a while any mo'n I kin. Ef I shet up my rasteran de business gwine ter drap off ter some oder rasteran."

"But, bruder Tobe, isn't it better, even as you put it," protested the minister, "dat Mis Buggone's business should drop off an' yours too, dan dat you should drop off youselves? Howsumever, I see de force ob what you both say, and we mus' try ter hit upon a golden mean. I reckon dar's a way by which you can both keep your business and yet keep youselves from goin' beyon' your 'bility. You are both useful citizens and supporters ob de gospel, and I'm concerned fer your welfare, bodily as well as sperital."

"Aun' Sheba," said her daughter, "you'se my moder an' I ought ter be de fust one ter help ease you up. I just dun declar dat you'se got ter take Vilet ter help you up. I kin spar her, an' I will spar her. She's strong an' gwine on twelve, an' de babies is gitten so dat dey ain't aroun' under my feet all de time. Vilet's spry an' kin run here an' dar an' fill de orders. She'd ease you up right smart."

"Now, Sissy," said her husband, who always called her by the old household name, "dat's bery sens'ble and child-like in you to put yousef out fer you'se muder. I'd been tinkin' 'bout Vilet, but I didn't like de suggestin ob her

leabin' you to do so much ob de work. But go ahead, Sissy; go ahead, Vilet, an' you'll fin' me easy goin' at meal times."

"Come here, Vilet," said the minister.

The girl had been sitting on the floor at Aun' Sheba's feet, listening quietly and intelligently to all that had been said. She was tall for her age, and had the quiet steadfastness of gaze that was characteristic of her father. He was exceedingly fond and proud of her, for, with very little schooling, she had learned to read and write. Even as a child she had much of his patience and unselfishness, thus making herself very useful at home. She looked unshrinkingly at the minister, but trembled slightly, for she felt all eyes were upon her.

"Vilet," began Mr. Birdsall, "you are said to be a good chile, an' I like the sens'ble, quiet way in which you stan' up an' look me in de face. I reckon dar ain't much foolishness in you. Your fader and moder hab shown de right spirit, de self-denying spirit dat de Lawd will bless. Can you say the fifth commandment, chile?" Vilet repeated it promptly.

"Dat's right. Now your fader an' moder are honahing dar moder, an' you are goin' to hab a chance ter honah dem an' your granma, too. You will hab temptations in de streets ter be pert an' idle, ter stop an' talk to dis one and ter answer back to dat one in a way you shouldn't. But if you go along quiet an' steady, an' do what you're tole, an' be car'ful 'bout de money an' de messages an' de orders an' so forth, you will reflect honah on us all an' 'specially on all your folks. You understan', Vilet?"

"Yes, sir."

The minister put his hand on her head, and said solemnly, "You have my blessin', Vilet."

She ducked a little courtesy, and again squatted at the feet of Aun' Sheba, who, much affected, was wiping her eyes with her apron, while Sissy's emotion was audible.

"Now, frens," resumed Mr. Birdsall, "this 'mergency of

Mis Buggone's health has been met in de right human and Scriptural spirit. Frens and fam'ly hab gathered 'roun' de 'flicted one, an' hab paid dar respect ter her usefulness an' value, an' hab shown her becomin' sympathy. Her own fam'ly, as is also becomin', hab been first ter ease her up accordin', first, to the law of primigeneshureship. I know dat dis is a long word, but long words of'en mean a heap, an' dat's why dey are so long. Dat good little girl, Vilet, is de oldes' granchile, an' she fulfils a great law in helpin' her granma. Den it's accordin' to the gospel, for a loving an' self-denyin' spirit has been shown. Mr. Watson has obeyed de great law of matrimony. He has married *into* dis fam'ly, an' he pulls with it an' for it instead ob against it as we see too of'en. De Lawd's blessin' will rest on dis fam'ly."

"I feels greatly comforted," said Aun' Sheba. "Dis has been a bressed season an' a out-pourin'. I mos' feels 'ligious dis ebenin'. De chilen an' dis deah chile" (patting Vi'let's head) "warm me up betteh'n flannel an' de fiah. Elder, you'se a good shep'd ob de flock. You'se a lookin' arter body an' soul. You'se got de eddication to talk big words to us, an', now we'se free, we hab a right to big words, no mattah how much dey mean. It's po'ful comfortin' ter know we'se doin' 'cordin' to de law an' de gospel."

"'Pears ter me," said old Tobe, "dat Uncle Sheba might hab a little law an' gospel 'plied ter him. He am one ob de fam'ly. I'se a heap ol'er dan he be, an' I'se up wid de sun an' I ony wish I could set when de sun sets. 'Pears like he orter tote some ob de tings ez well ez his slip ob a grandaughter," and old Tobe's wool seemed fairly to bristle with indignation and antipathy.

"I've no doubt," began Mr. Birdsall, "but Mr. Buggone'll emulate—"

"Elder," interrupted Aunt Sheba, with portentous solemnity, "dere's bobscure 'flictions in dis worl' dat can't be 'splained, an' de 'flictions ofen begin wen we say 'for bettah

or wusser.' You'se say youself in de pulpit dat de gret an' bressed sinner, Paul, had a thorn in de flesh an' he couldn't git rid ob it nohow, dat he jes' bar wid it an' go 'bout his business. Ole Tobe *am* old, but he wasn't bawn tired. Dere's men dat's po'ful weak in de jints ob de body, yit dat doesn't hender dem from gittin' 'round, but wen de weak feelin' gits inter de jints ob de min' den dey's shuah to be kinder limpsy-slimpsy an' dey ain't no help fer it. Ez I sez afore, de 'fliction am bobscure. You see de feet an' you see de han's, an' you tink dat dey kin go an' do like oder han's an' feet, but dey doesn't an' dey can't. Dere ain't no backbone runnin' up troo de min' an' wen dere ain't no backbone in de min' de pusson jest flop down yere an' flop down dar whareber dere's a com'fo'ble place to flop. Dere's 'flictions dat we kin pray agin an' pray out'n ob, an' dere's oders we jes got ter bar, an' we gits so kinder used to'm at las dat we'd be mo' mis'ble ef dey wuz tooken away. We'se got to take de bittah wid de sweet, but, tank de Lawd! de sweet 'domernate in dis yere fam'ly. Now let's hab some praise an' prar. Vilet, honey, sing de hymn you'se moder lern you."

And in a somewhat shrill, yet penetrating, musical voice, the girl sang:

"I'se a-journeyin', I'se a-journeyin',
An' de way am bery long;
De road ain't known, de way ain't shown,
Yit I journeys wid a song.

CHORUS

"De journey, de journey, howeber rough de road,
It's a-leadin', it's a-leadin', to a hebinly abode.

"I'se a-travelin', I'se a-travelin',
From de cradle to de grave,
De road am rough and sho' anuff,
De heart, hit mus' be brave.

"I'se a-wondrin', I'se a-wondrin',
Wen de journey will be troo;
But I goes along wid sigh an' song,
An' a cheery word fer you."

Kern Watson and his wife were gifted with those rich, mellow, African voices made so familiar in plantation songs and hymns. In the case of "Sissy" there was a pathetic, contralto, minor quality in her tones, and the first time young Watson heard her sing a spell was thrown round his fancy which led to all the rest. The same might be said of her, for when her husband, then a stranger, poured forth, in one of their evening meetings, the great rich volume of his voice, she ceased to sing that she might listen with avidity. It was not long after that before Kern mustered courage to ask "Miss Buggone, mout I hab de pleasure ob 'companyin' you home?" Not many months elapsed before he accompanied her home to stay, with Aun' Sheba's full consent.

Other hymns followed in which Uncle Sheba took part with much unction, for he wished to impress all present that in spite of the "bobscure affliction" he "injied 'ligion" as much as any of them. Mr. Birdsall offered a characteristic prayer, and then Aun' Sheba nodded to Sissy, who brought out a large supply of cakes and apples. Some gossip among the women and political discussion among the men occurred while these were being disposed of, and then the little company broke up, leaving Aun' Sheba much improved in health and spirits.

CHAPTER XIII

CAPTAIN BODINE

THE next day was warm and sunny, and Aun' Sheba, rising much refreshed, felt herself equal to her duties in spite of her fears to the contrary. She took Vile with her to a shop, and there purchased a much smaller basket, the weight of which when filled would not be burdensome to the girl. Thus equipped she appeared before Mara at the usual hour with her grandchild, and began complacently: "Now, honey lam', you'se gwine to hab two strings to you'se bow. I sometimes feel ole an' stiff in my jints an' my heft is kinder agin me in trompin'. Here's my granddaughter, an' she's spry as a cricket. She kin run yere an' dar wid de orders'n less dan no time, so you won't be kept kin' ob scruged back an' down kase I'se slow an' hebby. You see?"

"Yes, Aun' Sheba, and I am very glad to see. I have been worrying about you, for it has seemed to me that you were going beyond your strength, and yet I did not know of any one to help you or whether you wanted any one."

"Now, honey, you jes' took de words out'n my mouth 'bout you. You'se lookin' po'ly, an' I'se dreffle 'feared you'se gwine ter get beat out. You want help mo'n me, an' I'se had it on my min' ter talk wid you."

"Oh, Aun' Sheba, I'm very well," protested Mara, yet glad to think that her paleness and languor were ascribed to fatigue.

"Now see yere, honey, I'se got my blin' side, I know, but it ain't toward you. I watch ober you too many yeahs not to know wen you po'ly. You'se gwine beyon' you

strengt, too. Why can't you get some one ter he'p you an' den we go along swimmin'?"

"Well, I'll see. I reckon I'll be better soon, and I don't care to do more than can be done in a quiet way."

The new arrangement on Aun' Sheba's side of the "pana'ship" soon began to work well. Vilet proved quick and trustworthy, saving her grandmother many a weary step, and Mara was compelled to see that the mutual income might be greatly increased if she also had efficient help. She recognized the truth that she was becoming worn, and she also knew the cause to be that she worked without the spring of hopefulness or even the quietness of a heart at rest. She had almost decided to intrust Aun' Sheba with the task of finding a suitable helper, when she made two acquaintances who were destined to become intimately associated with her experiences.

One afternoon she felt so lonely, desolate and hopeless that she felt she must go out of herself. The future was taking on an aspect hard to face. Disposed to self-sacrifice, she was wretchedly conscious that there was nothing on which she could bestow a devotion which could sustain or inspire. There was no future to look forward to, no cause to be furthered, no goal to be reached by brave, patient effort. If she had lived at the time of the war she would have loved scarcely less than her mother, but her heart would have been almost equally divided between the cause and those who fought and suffered for it. If her lot had been cast in the North it would have been much the same. The same patriotic motives would have kindled her imagination and produced the most intense loyalty in thought and action. She was endowed with a spirit which, had she lived in the past, might easily have led her into an effort to restore some overthrown dynasty, and she would have so idealized even a very questionable conspiracy as to render it worthy, in her belief, of unstinted self-sacrifice. A girl of her character would have faced the wild beasts of the Roman amphitheatre for the sake of her faith, or she would

have intrigued against the Spanish Inquisition although hourly conscious that she was exposing herself to its horrors. It was this very tendency to give herself up wholly to some object which she felt had a supreme claim upon her, that had enabled her to live so long upon the memories of the past. The lost cause, for which her father had died, had been as sacred to her as the old dream of freedom to a Pole, but Clancy's question in regard to the old phase of her life, "What good will it do?" combining with other circumstances, had awakened her to the futility of her course. Denied the hope of any future achievement, lacking a powerful motive to sacrifice herself and her love, her strong nature chafed and tended to despondency at the thought of a simple existence. It was not enough merely to earn a living and live. She craved an inspiring object, an antidote for her heartache, a consciousness that in giving up much she also accomplished much. Yet the future stretched away like an arid plain and she was depressed by the foreboding that every step carried her further from all that could give zest to life. She was, therefore, in a mood to accept anything which would relieve the dreary monotony.

On the afternoon in question she decided to call upon an old lady who had lost nearly all her kindred and property. "Surely," thought the girl, "she has nothing to look forward to in this world but a few more straitened years, then death. I wish I were as old as she."

Taking a little delicacy she started out to pay the visit, hoping to gain an insight into the philosophy of patient endurance. She veiled herself heavily, for she was ever haunted by the fear of meeting Clancy on the street, and that her tell-tale face might lead him to guess the cost of her effort to avoid him.

An old colored woman showed the way into the parlor while she went up to prepare her mistress for the call. Reading by the window was a middle-aged gentleman who bowed gravely and resumed his book.

He riveted Mara's attention instantly, for her first glance revealed that he had lost his right leg and that crutches leaned against the arm of his chair. He could not be other than a veteran of the Confederate army, as it would be strange indeed to find an ex-soldier of the North in that abode. His strong, finely-cut side face, distinctly outlined against the light, was toward her. It was marked by deep lines as if the man had suffered and had passed through memorable experiences. He wore no beard or whiskers, but an iron-gray mustache gave a distinguished cast to a visage whose habitual expression was rather cold and haughty.

Mara had time to note these characteristics before she was summoned to Mrs. Bodine's apartment. Although the day was mild, the old lady, wrapped in shawls, sat by an open fire, and her wrinkled face lighted up with pleasure as the girl came toward her. Indeed, there was something like excitement in her manner as she kissed her guest and said: "Bring your chair close, my dear, so I can see you and hold your hand. I've something to tell you which I reckon will interest you almost as much as it does me."

When Mara was seated in a low chair she resumed: "How much you would look like your father, child, if your eyes were bright and laughing instead of being so large and sad! Well, well, there has been enough to make all our eyes sad, and you, poor child, have had more than enough. Yet you are good and brave, my dear. So far from sitting down in helpless grieving, you are taking care of yourself and have time to think of an old woman like me. Poor Mrs. Hunter! what would she do without you? She, like so many of us, has been blighted and stranded, and she would have been worse off than I if it had not been for you, for I have a little left, but oh, it is so little. Never did I wish it were more so much as I do now. You must be patient with me, child. I sit here so much alone that it is a godsend to have some one to talk to, and you are the very one I wanted to see. I was going to send for you, for

I knew you would like to see my guests. My cousin and his daughter are visiting me, and I wish they could stay with me always. I knew you would like to meet Captain Bodine—"

"Captain Bodine!" exclaimed Mara, "why, that is the name of an officer who used to be in my father's regiment."

"He is the very same, my dear."

"Was that he in the parlor?" Mara asked, trembling with excitement.

"Yes, he and his daughter arrived only yesterday."

"Oh!" said Mara, "I've received letters from him, and I've longed to see him for years. Can I not go down and speak to him at once? I surely do not need any introduction to the old friend of my father."

"No, my dear, no indeed. You need no formal introduction to any guest or relative of mine. Besides, he knows you well and all about you, although he has never seen you since you were a child. It would please him greatly to have you go down and speak to him at once, for he would know that I would tell you about his being here, and he might think you cold or formal if you delayed seeing him. I'm glad you feel so, my dear, but you must come back and sit with me awhile before you go home. I'll ring for Hannah and have a nice little feast while you are downstairs."

Mara scrupulously veiled her impatience until her kind, garrulous friend was through, and then stole with swift, noiseless tread to the parlor below. Standing in the doorway, she saw that the object of her quest was absorbed in his book. "He is my ideal of the soldier of that day," she thought. "How truly he represents us, with his sad, proud face and mutilated body!" In a sort of awe she hesitated a moment and then said timidly, "Captain Bodine."

He looked up quickly, and seeing Mara's lustrous eyes and flushed face, divined instantly who she was.

"Is not this Miss Wallingford?" he asked, his face expressing glad anticipation as he began to gather up his crutches.

"Do not rise," cried Mara, coming forward instantly with outstretched hands.

But he was on his crutches, and said feelingly, "Heaven forbid that I should receive the daughter of my old friend with so little respect." He took the girl's face into his hands, and looked earnestly into her eyes. "Yes," he resumed gently, "you are Sidney Wallingford's child. God bless you, my dear," and he kissed her lightly on the forehead. "You won't mind this from an old comrade of your father," he said as he made her take his chair and sat down near her. "We have been bereft of so much that what remains has become very precious. I know all about you, Mara."

Tears were in the girl's eyes as she replied falteringly, "And I know of you, sir, and have longed to meet you. You can scarcely know how much your words mean to me when you say you were my father's comrade and friend. I knew this, but it seems more real to me now, and I feel that seeing you is coming as near as I can to seeing him."

"My poor child! Would to God that he had lived, for you would have been his pride and solace, as my daughter is to me. When I saw you last you were a little black-eyed girl and happily did not understand your loss, although you looked as if you did. I never thought so many years would pass before I saw you again, but we have had to fight some of our hardest battles since the war," and he sighed deeply.

"How soon can I meet your daughter?" Mara asked, her eyes full of sympathy.

"Very soon. I urged her to take a walk on the Battery, for she has not been very well of late. I said I knew all about you, as I have been told of your loyalty and brave efforts and your kindness to my aged cousin, but now that I see you, I feel that I know very little. Your face is full of stories, my dear child. You are young, and yet you look as if the memories of the past had made you far older than your years warrant. That is the trouble with us. We have

much more to look back upon than to look forward to. Yet it should not be so with you."

"It can scarcely be otherwise," Mara answered sadly; "you have touched the very core of our trouble, and I suppose it is the trouble with us all who are so closely linked with the past—we have so little to look forward to. But now that you can tell me about my father the past seems so near and real that I do not wish to think about anything else."

Time sped rapidly as Captain Bodine recalled the scenes and incidents of his life which were associated with his old commander, and Mara listened with an absorbed, tearful interest which touched him deeply. The proud, reserved expression of his face had passed away utterly, and the girl appreciated the change. His sympathy, the gentleness of his tones and the profound respect which was blended with his paternal manner made her feel that her father's friend was already her friend in a very near and sacred sense. While he was reserved about his own affairs, and she also was conscious of a secret of which she could never speak, they had so much in common that she felt that they could talk for hours. But the old lady in the apartment above grew impatient, and at last Hannah stood courtesying in the door as she said, "Missus p'sent her compl'ments an' say would be glad to see you."

"There, I've been selfish and thoughtless," said Captain Bodine, "but I shall see you again, for it will give Ella and me great pleasure to call upon you."

"Yes, indeed, we must meet often," Mara added earnestly. "I hope you are going to make a long stay in Charleston."

"I scarcely know," he replied, and again there was an involuntary sigh; "but I must keep you no longer."

CHAPTER XIV

"ALL GIRLS TOGETHER"

"I'M not going to lose my visit altogether," said Mrs. Bodine, when Mara returned with an apology. "If the captain has only one leg, he can get out and around better than I can. Indeed it is wonderful how he does get around. He is the spryest man on crutches I ever saw, and you know, my dear, I've seen a good many. In that dreadful war we were only too glad to get our men back, what was left of them, and if an arm or a leg were missing we welcomed them all the more, but we couldn't give much more than a welcome. It was wreck and ruin on every side. If we had our own the captain would be well off, as you and I would be, but he is poor; poorer than most of us. In fact, he hasn't anything. He wasn't one of those supple jointed men who could conform to the times, and he wasn't brought up to make his living by thrifty ways. But he did his best, poor boy, he did his best. Would you like to hear more about him?"

"Yes, indeed," Mara replied, "you can't know how deeply I am interested in him and his daughter. He was my father's comrade in arms, his friend and follower. You must pardon me for staying away so long, but when he began talking of my father I felt as if I could listen forever, you know. I honor him all the more because he is poor."

"Yes, my dear, I know. Most of us are learning the hard lessons of poverty. I call him a boy because it seems only the other day he was a boy and a handsome one, too.

He used to visit us here, and was so full of fun and frolic! But he has had enough to sober him, poor fellow. He was scarcely more than a boy when the war began, but he was among the first to enlist, and, like your father, he was a private soldier at first. He soon received a commission in the same regiment of which your father became colonel, and no doubt would have reached a much higher rank if he had not lost his leg. He met with this loss before your brave father was killed, but I suppose he told you."

"Yes," faltered Mara, "he told me why he was not with my father at the last."

"Yes, if he could he would have been with him and died with him, and sometimes I almost think he wishes that such had been his fate, he has suffered so much. During the remainder of the war he had command of inland positions which did not require marching, and he always made the record of a brave, high-minded officer. After the war he married a lovely girl, and tried to keep the old plantation: but his capital was gone, taxes were high, the negroes wouldn't work, and I suppose he and his wife didn't know how to practice close economy, and so the place had to be sold. It didn't bring enough to pay the mortgages. It cut him to the quick to part with the old plantation on which the family had lived for generations, but far worse was soon to follow, for his wife died, and that nearly broke his heart. Since that time he has lived in Georgia with his only child, Ella, getting such occupation as he could—office work of various kinds, but I suppose his reserved, gloomy ways rendered him unpopular; and even our own people, when it comes to business, prefer an active man who has a ready word for every one. I conjecture much of this, for he is not inclined to talk about himself. Poor as I am, I'm glad they accepted my invitation, and I mean to do all in my power to get him employment here. I have a little influence yet with some people, and perhaps a place can be found or made for him. He and his daughter don't require very much, and God knows I'd share my last crust with

them, and," she concluded with a little apologetic laugh, "it *is* almost like sharing a crust."

"Oh, he will get employment," cried Mara, enthusiastically; "his disabled condition in itself will plead eloquently for him. How old is Ella?"

"She must be eighteen or thereabout."

"I wonder if she wouldn't like to help me?"

"Help you? She'd be delighted. But then, my dear, you must not be carried away by your generous feeling. We're all proud of you because you have struck out so bravely for yourself; but surely you have burdens enough already."

"Perhaps Ella can lighten my burden, and I hers; but it is very homely, humble work."

"You dear child!" exclaimed Mrs. Bodine, with her little chirruping laugh, "you are not a very homely, humble doer of the work. I reckon there's no prouder girl in town. But that's the way it is with the captain and all of us, in fact. The poorer we are, the prouder we are. Well, well, our pride is about all we can keep in these times. You need have no fear, however, that Ella will hesitate in helping you, except as she may very naturally think herself incompetent, or that you are wronging yourself in trying to help her."

"We'll see about it," Mara remarked thoughtfully; "I will invite her to spend a morning with me, and then she can obtain a practical idea of my work. She might not like it at all, or she might like to do something else much better, and so would be embarrassed if I asked her to help me, disliking to refuse, and yet wishing to do so."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Bodine, smiling; "we have some right to think ourselves 'quality' still, as old Hannah calls us. We are just as considerate of one another's feelings as if we were all Royal Highnesses. Have it your own way, my dear, if you truly think Ella can be of service to you. I reckon you need help, for you don't look as well as when I saw you last."

"Yes," acquiesced Mara, "I think I do need help. Aun' Sheba's granddaughter is assisting her, and a good deal more could be sold if it were properly prepared. It would be a great happiness if my need opened the way for Ella, for I feel it would please my father as much as it would please me if I could be of service to his old friend and his daughter."

"I have heard, dear, that you are always trying to do what you thought your father and mother would like."

"God forbid I should do otherwise," said the girl solemnly.

"Well, perhaps they know all about it," said the old lady, wiping a tear from her eye. "How close our troubles bring us together. You are lonely for your parents, and I am lonely for my husband and children."

"And yet you are braver and more cheerful than I," responded Mara; "I was so sad and discouraged over the future this afternoon, that I came to you, thinking that you might unconsciously teach me patience and courage. Truly I was guided, for you face everything like a soldier. Then in meeting Captain Bodine, I seem to have been brought nearer my father than ever before. I can't hear about him without tears, yet I would turn from any pleasure in the world to hear about him. What happiness if he had lived and I could help him in some way!"

"Well, my dear, we all have our own way of bearing our burdens, and I often wonder whether I have done more laughing or crying in my life. It has been one or the other most of the time. I have always thanked the Lord that when the pain or the trouble was not too severe, I could laugh, and soon I know all tears will be wiped away. It's harder for you, my dear; it is harder for you than me. My voyage has been long and stormy; husband, sons, and the cause for which they died all lost; but I'm coming into the harbor. You've got your voyage before you. But take courage. Who knows but that your early days may be your darkest days? They can't always be dark when you

are so ready to brighten the lives of others. There, I hear Ella's voice."

A moment later there was a knock at the door, and Ella Bodine entered. We have all seen bright-hued flowers growing in shaded places, and among cold, grim rocks. Such brightness had the young girl who now appears upon the scene of our story. One speedily felt that its cause was not in externals, but that it resulted from inherent qualities. As with Mara, there had been much in her young life sad and hard to endure. She had not surmounted her trouble by shallowness of soul or callousness, but rather by a spiritual buoyancy which kept her above the dark waves, and enabled her to enjoy all the sunshine vouchsafed. Yet, unlike her father and Mara, she lived keenly in the present. She sympathized truly and honestly with her father, and in a large measure intelligently recognized the nature of the deep shadows projected across his life from the past, but it was her disposition to keep as near to him as possible and yet remain just beyond the shadows. She possessed a wholesome common-sense which taught her that the shadows were not hers and that they were not good for her father; so she was ever making inroads upon them, beguiling him into a smile, surprising him into a laugh—in brief, preventing the shadows from deepening into that gloom which is dangerous to bodily and spiritual health. She made his small earnings go a great way, and banished from his life the sordidness of poverty. God outlines an angel in many a woman's heart, and often privations and sorrow, more surely than luxury, fill out the divine sketch. In the instance of Ella Bodine the angelic was so sweetly and inextricably interwoven with all that was human that to mortal comprehension she was better than a wilderness of conventional angels. She was depressed now under one of the few forms of adversity that could cast her down. Her father was out of employment, their slender income had ceased, and they were dependent. She felt this cruel position all

the more because Mrs. Bodine out of her poverty gave her hospitality so unstintedly and ungrudgingly.

To the sensitive, fine-natured girl it was like feeding upon the life of another, and that other a generous friend.

During her walk a score of schemes to earn money had presented themselves to her inexperienced mind, but her hands had learned only how to eke out a small salary and to minister to her father. She had come home resolute to do something, but troubled because she knew not what to do.

She paused a moment on the threshold of Mrs. Bodine's apartment, and looked questioningly at Mara, at the same time half divining who she was.

"Come along, Ella," cried Mrs. Bodine, with a little joyous laugh of anticipation, "and kiss one of your best friends, although you never saw her before."

"Is it Mara?"

Mara's smile and swift approach answered her question. In an instant the two girls were in each other's arms, their warm Southern hearts touched by the electric fire of sympathy and mutual understanding. Mrs. Bodine clapped her little, thin hands and cried, "Oh, that's fine. Southern girls have not died out yet. Why, even my old withered heart had one of the most delicious thrills it ever experienced. Now, my dears, come and sit beside me and get acquainted."

"Oh, I know you already, Mara Wallingford," said Ella with sparkling eyes.

"And I am learning to know you, Ella. I know you already well enough to love you."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Bodine, raising her hands in a comic gesture, "I reckon the ice is broken between you."

They all laughed at this sally, and Mara was so cheered, her nerves all tingling with excitement, that she could scarcely believe herself to be the half-despairing girl of a few hours before. "Now come," resumed Mrs. Bodine, "let us all be girls together and have a good talk. At this

rate I'll soon be younger than either of you. I haven't had my share yet. Do you believe it, Ella? Mara has been downstairs petting your father for an hour."

"I wonder where he is. He wasn't in the parlor when I came in."

"I reckon he followed your good example and went out for a walk. I heard the door shut. Well, you girls make a picture that it does my old eyes good to look at. Here's Mara with her creamy white skin and eyes as lustrous now as our Southern skies when full of stars, but sometimes, oh so sad and dark. Dear child, I wish I could take the gloom all out of them, for then I could think your heart was light. But I know how it is; I know. Your mother gave you her sad heart when she gave you life, but you have your father's strength and courage, my dear, and you will never give up. And here is Ella with complexion of roses and snow and eyes like violets with the morning dew still on them—forgive an old woman's flowery speech, for that's the way we used to talk when I was young—yes, here is Ella, a little peach blossom, yet brimming over with the wish to become a big, luscious peach. Lor, Lor—oh, fie! Am I saying naughty words? But then, my dears, you know my husband was a naval officer, and no man ever swore more piously than he. Bad words never sounded bad to me when he spoke them—he was such a good Christian! and he always treated me as he expected to be treated when he was on deck. I reckon that I and the Commodore are the only ones that ever ordered *him* around," and the old lady cried and laughed at the same time, while the faces of her young companions were like flowers brightened by the sun while still wet with dew.

"Let me see," continued the old lady, "where was I when I began to swear a little; just a little, you know. It is a sort of tribute to my husband, and so can't be very wicked. Oh, I remember, I was thinking what fun it would have been to chaperon you two girls at one of our grand balls in the good old times. I would sail around like a

great ship of the line, convoying two of the trimmest little crafts that ever floated, and all the pirates, I mean gallant young men, my dears, would hover near, dying to cut you out right under my guns, or nose, as land-lubbers would say. Well, well, either of you could lead a score of them a chase before you signed articles of unconditional surrender,'' and Mrs. Bodine leaned back in her chair and laughed in her silvery little birdlike twitter. The girls laughed with her, pleased in spite of themselves with visions that, both in their nature and by tradition, accorded with the young romantic period of life. But memory speedily began to restore gravity to Mara's face. Mrs. Bodine recognized this, and her own face grew gentle and sorrowful. Laying a hand on each of the girls heads she resumed, ''Do not think I am a frivolous old woman because I run on so. I do not forget the present any more than Mara, I see, cannot. Dear children, the circumstances of your lot render you as burdened and, in some ways, almost as old as I am. Ella can forget easier than you, Mara, but that is because God has put brightness into her heart. Let us all face the truth together. I am long past being an elegant matron. I am only a poor old childless widow with but a few more days of feebleness and suffering before me, yet I do not sigh in a bitter, murmuring spirit. Old as I am, I am still God's little child, and sometimes I think this truth makes me as mirthful as a child. When the pain is hardest to bear, when the past, oh, the past—with all its immeasurable losses, begins to crush my very soul, I turn my dim eyes upward and repeat to myself, 'There *is* a Heaven of eternal rest and joy,' and so I grow serene in my waiting. I have always loved the bright, pleasant things of this world—it was my nature to do so—but He who bears the burdens and heartbreak of the whole world has gently lifted my love up to Him. Didn't He have compassion on the widow of Nain, and say to her, 'Weep not'? My gallant husband, my brave boys and this poor little widow are all in His hands, and I try to obey His gentle command not to weep

except sometimes when I can't help it and He knows I can't."

The two girls with their heads in her lap were crying softly from sympathy. With light, caressing touches to each the old lady continued, "Ella, my dear, you are like me in some respects. You, too, love the bright pleasant things of this world, and you are so divinely blessed with a buoyancy of heart that you will make what is hard and humdrum bright for yourself and others. You will embroider life with sunshine if there is any sunshine at all. Like myself, you will be able to smile and laugh whenever the pain is not too severe, yet I fear it will be very hard sometimes. But, as my husband would say, you are taut, trim and well ballasted, and good for a long, safe voyage. You have obeyed the Fifth Commandment, and its promise is yours.

"Mara, dear child my heart, for some reason, aches for you. I knew and loved your grandfather and your father and mother. You were born into a heritage of bitterness and sorrow, and I fear Mrs. Hunter, with all her good qualities, was not so constituted as to be able to counteract inherited tendencies. I wish I could have brought you up, for then we could have cried or laughed together over what happened.

"But you have learned to repress and to brood—two dangerous habits. You want to do some great thing, and alas! there is seldom a great thing which we poor women can do. You are not impelled by ambition or a desire for notoriety, but by a sort of passion for self-sacrifice.

"If you had lived twenty odd years ago no soldier of the South could have been braver or more devoted. You are not satisfied with mere living and making the best of life as it is. I don't know why, but I feel that there are depths in your heart which no one understands. Be careful, dear child, and be patient. Don't yield to some morbid idea of duty, or be involved in some chimerical plan of an achievement.

"Learn Ella's philosophy, and be as content with sunshine and daily duty as possible. Ella will do this unconsciously, my dear; you will have to do it consciously, just as a sick man seeks health. But you will both have to go forward and meet woman's lot. I was once a young girl, fancy free, like you. How much has happened since! I now feel like an old hen that would like to gather you both under her wing in shelter from all trouble," and again her little laugh chimed out while she wiped away the tears which sprang from her motherly heart.

The thump of Captain Bodine's crutches was heard on the stair. "Bring him in," said Mrs. Bodine, mopping her eyes vigorously.

Ella ran to the door and admitted him, and then, with a pretty custom she had, took away a crutch, and substituting one of her own round shoulders supported him to a large armchair. The low western sun flooded the room with light. He looked questioningly at the dewy eyes of the two girls and at the evidences of emotion which Mrs. Bodine had not been fully able to remove.

"Well," said he, "what part am I to have in this mournful occasion?"

Ella stood beside him with her arm about his neck, and was about to speak, when Mrs. Bodine said quickly in her piquant way, "You are to be chief mourner."

"A role for which I am peculiarly fitted," he replied sadly, not catching her humor.

"Oh, papa, you don't understand," cried Ella, "we have been having just a heavenly time."

He looked at Mara as she stood beside the old lady, and his very soul was touched by the sympathy expressed for him in her beautiful eyes. Standing there, enveloped in sunshine, it seemed to him that no angel of God could regard him more kindly. It was not pity, but rather honor, affection and that deep commiseration of which but few women are capable. He felt instinctively that she knew all and that her woman's heart was suffering vicariously

with him and for him. The very air was electrical with deep human feeling, and he, yielding to a strong impulse scarcely understood, said earnestly, "God bless you, Mara Wallingford."

Sensible old Mrs. Bodine felt that it was time to come back to every-day life, so she said promptly, "Yes, and He is going to bless her, and bless us all. If there is any mourning to be done on this occasion you must do it. We three girls have been having a good talk, and are the better for it. That's the demmed total—oh, fie! there I am at it again. Well, Cousin Hugh, to take you into our entire confidence, we have been facing things and have arrived at several conclusions, one of which is—now, Ella, shut your ears—that you have one of the best daughters in the world, and that she and Mara have quite broken the ice between them and are going to be very good friends, and I was saying how I would like to convoy two such girls in one of our ballrooms in the good old times—oh, well, we have just been having a long lingo as girls will when they get together."

Captain Bodine was gifted with tact and a quick appreciation. He understood the old lady and her purpose.

"Cousin Sophy," he said, "you are just the same as when, a boy, I used to visit you—tears and smiles close together. Well, I believe that Heaven comes down very near when you three girls get together."

The old lady lay back in her chair and laughed heartily. "Oh, Ella, if you only knew what a mischievous boy your father was once! But, there, we have had enough of the past and the future for one day. Mara, my dear, you must stay and banquet with us. No, no, no, I won't hear any excuse. When I once get on quarter-deck every one must obey orders. Ella, direct Hannah to spread the festive board. You and Mara can lend a hand, and you can put on all we have in five minutes. To think that I should have eaten that delicious jelly you brought, greedy old cormorant that I am!"

A few moments later Mara supported the old lady down to the dining-room, and, though the viands were few and meagre, the banqueters, to say the least, were not commonplace. Mara said nothing of her plan, but Ella was invited to spend the following morning with her. In the late lingering twilight Captain Bodine escorted the young girl home. On the way thither they came plump upon Owen Clancy. He glanced keenly from one to the other as he lifted his hat. Mara's only response was a slight bow.

CHAPTER XV

TWO LITTLE BAKERS

MARA led Captain Bodine up to their little parlor and introduced him to Mrs. Hunter, who received him most cordially, feeling that in him she recognized a congenial spirit. He treated her with the respect and old-time courtesy which she said was "so truly Southern." Their feelings and beliefs touched closely at several points, yet they were very different in their essential characteristics. Poor Mrs. Hunter had been limited by nature and education. She could not help being narrow in all her views; she was scarcely less able to dismiss her intense, bitter prejudices. She was quite incapable of reasoning herself into her mental position; it was simply the inevitable result of her circumstances, her lot and her own temperament. Captain Bodine was a proud man, as proud toward himself as toward others. The cause for which he and his kindred had suffered and lost so much had been sacred, and therefore it ever would be sacred. To change his views, to begin revising his opinions, would be to stultify himself and to reflect dishonor on his comrades in arms who had perished. In the very depths of his young, ardent spirit he had once devoted himself to the South; he had listened reverently to prayers from the pulpit that God would bless the Southern armies; he had never entered into battle without petitions to Heaven, not that he might escape, but that the "Northern invader" might be overcome; his uniform had been stained with blood again and again as he held dying comrades in his arms and spoke words of

cheer. In his more limited way, he had the spirit of "Stonewall" Jackson. It was impossible for a man with his nature and with his memories to argue the whole matter over coolly and recognize misleading errors. During his youth and early manhood his feelings had been so intense as to be volcanic, and that feeling, like lava, had cooled off into its present unchangeable forms and sombre hues. What was bitterness and almost spite in Mrs. Hunter was a deep, abiding sorrow in his heart, a great dream unfulfilled, a cause lofty because so idealized, in support of which he often saw in fancy, when alone, spectral thousands in gray, marching as he once had seen them in actual life. That all had been in vain, was to him one of those mysterious provi dences to which he could only bow his head in mournful resignation, in patient endurance. He had no hate for the North, for he was broad enough in mind to recognize that it saw the question from its own point of view, and, as a soldier, he knew that its men had fought gallantly. But the North's side of the question was not his side. He had been conquered in arms but not convinced in spirit. While he had respect and even admiration for many of his old foes, and malice toward none, he still felt that there was a bridgeless chasm between them, and, by the instincts of his nature, he kept himself aloof. If he could perform an act of kindness to a Northerner he would do so unhesitatingly; then he would turn away with the impulse of an alien. He had no ambitious schemes or hopes for the future; he had buried the "lost cause" as he had buried his wife, with a grief that was too deep for tears. He had come to value life only for Ella's sake, and he tried to do his best from a soldier-like and Christian sense of duty, until he too could join his old comrade in arms.

Mrs. Hunter could not comprehend such a man, and he gave to her but the casual, respectful sympathy which he thought due to a gentlewoman who had lost much like so many other thousands in the South. After a brief call he hobbled away on his crutches, forgetting Mrs. Hunter

and, indeed, almost everything in the deep interest excited by Mara, the daughter of his old friend. "Would to God, he muttered, "that Sidney Wallingford could have lived and seen that girl look at him as she looked at me to-day."

Soon after Captain Bodine's departure, Mara pleaded fatigue and retired to her room, promising to answer her aunt's many questions on the morrow. She was very sad and discouraged with herself, and yet she had not the despairing sense of the utter futility of her life which had oppressed her when she started out in the early afternoon.

She had become so absorbed and interested by the incidents and experiences of her visit as to be almost happy. Just as she had attained a condition of mind which had not blessed her for months, she must meet Owen Clancy. With a sort of inward rage and wonder, she asked herself: "Why did my heart flutter so? Why did every nerve in my body tingle? He is nothing to me and never can be, yet, when he passed, a spirit from heaven could hardly have moved me more. What is his mysterious power which I cannot eradicate? Oh, oh, was not my life hard enough before? Must I go on, hiding this bitter secret? fighting this hopeless and seemingly endless fight? Well, well, thank God for this day, after all. In Ella Bodine and her father I have found friends who will occupy my thoughts and become incentives which I did not possess before. Dear father, my own dear, dead, soldier father, it would please you to have me do something for your old friend."

The next morning was bright and sunny, and, after an early breakfast, Mara was in the kitchen, with all the ingredients of the dainties she so skilfully produced, spread out upon the tables. Ella had been asked to come early; her father had escorted her to Mara's residence, and then gone away on an errand of his own.

The young girl was greeted with a warmth which made her at home at once, and proved the experiences of the previous afternoon were not the result of mood or passing sentiment. There was a depth in Mara's eyes and a firm-

ness about her mouth and chin which did not indicate changing and unreasoning "moods and tenses." In the clearer, calmer thought of the morning all her kind purposes toward Captain Bodine and Ella had been strengthened, and she also believed more fully that by interesting herself in them she would find the best antidote for her own trouble.

Ella had been welcomed by Mrs. Hunter, and now, as she sat in the little sun-lighted kitchen, there was neither past nor future to her. The present scene, with its simple, homely details, was all absorbing.

It meant very much to the girl, for she saw how Mara was achieving independence, and by work, too, which housekeeping for her father enabled her to understand better than any other. Mara's pulses were also quickened, for she understood the eager, intelligent glances of her friend. For a few moments, Ella, as company, felt compelled to maintain the quiet position of spectator; then overborne, she sprang up exclaiming: "Oh, Mara, dear, do give me an apron and let me help you. I'd have such a jolly forenoon!"

"Why, certainly, Ella, if it would give you pleasure."

The article was produced, and, with a sigh of deep content, the girl tied it around a waist by no means waspish. Then off came the little cuffs, and up the sleeves were rolled to the shoulder.

"Ella, what lovely arms you have! If I were a man I should be distracted by such a pair of arms."

"Well," remarked the girl, looking at them complacently, "they'd be strong enough to help a man that I cared sufficiently for to marry, but I haven't seen that man yet, and I hope his lordship will keep his distance indefinitely—till I have more time to bother with him and his distractions."

"Is your time, then, so completely occupied?"

"It isn't occupied at all, and that's the plague of it. But I reckon it soon will be," she added with an emphatic

little nod. "Papa shall learn that I can do something more for him than cook, and your example has fired my ambition. I'll ransack this town till I find something to do that will bring money. Dear old Mrs. Bodine! wasn't she perfectly enchanting yesterday? Do you think I can be content to live in idleness on her slender means? No, indeed. I'd buy a scrubbing-brush first. Oh, isn't this fun?" and the flour was already up to her elbows.

"Oh, Ella, dear, I'd feel just as you do if I had a father to work for."

"Now, Mara, don't talk so, or I'll put my floury arms right about your neck and spoil this dough with a flood of briny tears. See, the sun is shining and there is work to be done. Let's be jolly, and we'll have our little weep after sundown. Oh, Mara, dear, I wish I could make you as light-hearted as I am. I used to think it was almost wicked for me to be so light-hearted, but I don't think so any more, for I know I've kept papa from going down into horrid depths of gloom. And then this irrepressible spirit of fun helps me over ever so many hard places." She sprang back into the middle of the room, and, striking a serio-comic attitude, continued: "Here I am in no end of trouble—for *me*. There is a grief preying on my vitals that would make a poet's hair stand on end should he attempt to portray it. Were there a lover around the corner, sighing like a furnace, I would say to him 'Avaunt! My heart is broken, and do you think I can bother with you?' I am at odds with fate. I am in the most deplorable position into which any human being can sink. I have *nothing to do*. But here is a weapon by which one girl has conquered destiny," and she brandished the roller with which she had been pressing out the dough, "and I, too, shall find a sword which will cut all the pesky knots of this snarled-up old world. Then when I have achieved complete and lofty victory and independence, as you have, dear, I may say to the lover around the corner, 'Step this way, sir. I must consider first whether you would be agreeable to papa, and

then whether you would be agreeable to me and then'—Oh, what a little fool I am, and so many cookies to make. Please don't send me home. I will work now like a beaver," and her round white arms grew tense as she rolled with a vigor that would almost flatten brickbats.

Mara stood at one side watching her with eyes that grew wonderfully lustrous as was ever the case when she was pleased or excited. Then she stole up behind Ella, and, putting her arm around her neck, looked into her eyes as she asked, "Wouldn't you like to help me?"

"Of course I like to help you," said Ella, turning with surprise upon her friend.

"Now, Ella, be frank with me. Say no if you feel no. Wouldn't you like to help me all the time and earn money in this way?"

A slow deep flush overspread Ella's face as she stood for a moment with downcast eyes as if oppressed with a sense of shame. Then she said humbly: "Forgive me, Mara. I've been very thoughtless. I didn't think you would take my ranting as an appeal to your generous heart. Believe me, Mara, I was not hinting to you that I might share in the little you are earning so bravely. As if you had not burdens enough already."

Mara never once removed her eyes from the girl's ingenuous face and permitted her to reveal the unselfishness and sacred pride of her nature; then she said gently and firmly: "No, Ella, I did not misunderstand you a moment, and I want you to understand me. In one sense we have been acquainted always, yet we have loved each other from personal knowledge but a few short hours. We Southern girls need no apologies for our swift intuitions, our quick, warm feelings. I had this on my mind as soon as Mrs. Bodine told me about your being here, and I had quite set my heart upon it as soon as I saw you. Ella, dear, I *need* help; I have more than I can do. There is business enough to support us both, and I had almost concluded to

ask Aun' Sheba to get me a helper. But what a delight it would be to work with you!"

Ella's face had been brightening as if gathering all the sunshine in the spring sky, and she was about to speak eagerly when Mara stopped her by a gesture. "Wait," she said, "I did not say anything of this last evening because I was not sure you would like the work. If you do not like it, you must be frank to tell me so. If you do enter on it you must let me manage all in business-like ways, for I fear that you, like Aun' Sheba, will be inclined toward very loose accounts. You must be willing to take what I feel that you should have, and there must be no generous insubordination. Now you have the exact truth."

Ella's lip was quivering and her eyes were filling with gathering tears. With a little quaver in her voice she struggled hard to give a mirthful conclusion to the affair. "I accept the position, ma'am," she faltered, making a courtesy, then rushed into her friend's arms and sobbed: "Oh, Mara, Mara, you have lifted such a burden from my heart! I have had many troubles, but somehow it seemed that I couldn't bear this one, though I tried hard to keep the pain to myself—papa and I being dependent. And then to have the whole trouble banished by working with you in just the kind of work I like! Oh, Mara, darling, how can I ever thank you enough?"

"Good Lawd, honey, hab you heerd on any ob you'se folks dyin'?" and Aun' Sheba's awed face and ample form filled the doorway, with Vilet's wondering little visage peeping around behind her.

Ella sprang away, and, turning her back on the newcomers, mopped her face vigorously with her floury apron.

"No, Aun' Sheba," replied Mara, smiling through her tears, for Ella's strong emotion had unsealed the fountain of her eyes, "I've only followed your good advice and secured just the kind of help I need, the daughter of my father's dear old friend, Captain Bodine. I reckon you remember him."

"Well, now, de Lawd be bressed!" ejaculated Aun' Sheba, sitting down with her great basket at her feet. "'Member him? Reckon I does. I kin jes' see de han'-som boy as he march away wid you'se fader. An' his little Missy is you'se helper?" and she looked curiously at Ella, who was still seeking to gain self-control.

The girl wheeled around with a face wonderfully stained and streaked with flour and tears, and, ducking just such a courtesy as Vilet would have made, said to Aun' Sheba, "Yes'm. I'm the new hand. I'm a baker by trade."

Aun' Sheba's appreciation of humor was instantaneous, and she sat back in her chair, which shook and groaned under her merriment. "Can't fool dis culled pusson," she began at last. "You tink we doesn't keep up wid de times, but we does. I'se had a bery int'restin' season wid ole Hannah, who lib wid Mis' Bodine, bress her heart! She's quality yere on arth an' she gwine ter be quality in Hebin. I knows a heap 'bout you an' you'se pa. I knowd him 'fore you did. I'se seed him in de gran' ole house in Meetin' Street a dinin' agin an' agin wid Marse Wallingford an' my deah Misse Mary, den a bride, an' de gran' ole Major Buggone. Oh, Missy Mara, ef you could ony seen de ole major, you'd a seen a genywine So' Car'liny gen'l'man ob wat dey call de ole school. Reckon dey habn't any betteh schools now. An' young Marse Sidney, dat's you'se fader, Missy, and young Marse Hugh, dat's you'se fader, Missy Ella, dey was han'som as picters an' dey drink toasts ter Missy Mary an' compliment her an' she'd blush like a red rose; an' wen dey all 'bout ter march away Missy Mary kiss Marse Hugh jes as ef he her own broder. Lor, Lor, how it all come back ter me! Ef de Lawd don' bress de pa'na'ship twix' you two gyurls den I des dun beat."

Regardless of flour the two little bakers stood before Aun' Sheba with arms around each other while she indulged in reminiscences, then Ella, dashing away the tears that were gathering again, said brusquely, "The new hand will have to be boss if we go on this way. Aun'

Sheba, we haven't got a blessed thing ready to put in your basket."

"Many han's make light wuck," said the old woman sententiously. "I come yere arly dis mawnin' to gib Missy Mara a lif' kase she's been lookin' po'ly an' I hab her on my min' anxious-like. But now, wid a larfin', sunshiny little ting like you aroun', Missy Ella, she'll soon be as peart as a cricket. Vilet, chile, jes wait on me an' han' me tings, an' dese two baskets'll be filled in de quickest jiffy you eber see."

And so it turned out. Aunt Sheba was a veteran in the field. Flour, sugar and spices seemed to recognize her power and to come together as if she conjured. The stove was fed like the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, and the girls' faces suggested peonies as the cake grew light and brown.

Mrs. Hunter, having finished her morning duties, entered at last and looked with doubtful, troubled eyes upon the scene. Ella and Aun' Sheba's mirthful talk ceased, while little Vilet regarded the tall, gray-haired woman with awe.

"Well, times *have* changed," said the lady, with a sort of groan. "Our home has become little better than a bake-shop."

"Well, Missus," replied Aun' Sheba, with the graven-image expression that she often assumed before Mrs. Hunter, "I'se know'd of homes dat hab become wuss dan bake-shops. Neber in my bawn days hab I heerd on an active, prosp'rous baker starbin'. Jes' you try dis cooky right fum de stove an' see ef it doan melt in you'se mouf." And so Aun' Sheba stopped Mrs. Hunter's lamentations and clinched her argument.

CHAPTER XVI

HONEST FOES

CAPTAIN BODINE'S errand was characteristic of the man. He had accepted his cousin's hospitality and sympathy most gratefully, and his quick apprehension had gathered from some of her words that she was bent on moving her little segment of "heaven and earth," to secure him employment. While perfectly ready to receive any gracious benefactions from heaven, where he justly believed that the good old lady's power centred chiefly, he shrank from her terrestrial efforts in his behalf, knowing that they must be made with very few exceptions among those who were straitened and burdened already. He did not want a "place made" for him and to feel that other Southern men were practicing a severer self-denial in order to do so. With a grim, set look on his face as if he were going into battle, he halted downtown to the counting-room of one of the wealthiest merchants and shippers in the City. He knew this man only by reputation, and his friends would regard an application for employment to Mr. Houghton, as extraordinary as it certainly would be futile in their belief. Mr. Houghton was quite as bitter against the South in general and Charleston in particular as Mrs. Hunter in her enmity of all that savored of the North; and, as human nature goes, they both had much reason, or rather cause, for their sentiments. The experiences of many of that day were not conducive to calm historical estimates or to "the charity that suffereth long and is kind." Mr. Houghton was a New England man, and hated slavery almost as intensely as it deserved to be hated. The trouble with him

had been that he did not separate the "peculiar institution" widely enough from the men who had been taught by their fathers, mothers and ministers to believe in it. He made no allowances for his Southern fellow-citizens, as many of them would make none for him. With him, it was "Slave-driver"; with them, "Abolitionist"; yet he revered and they revered the great-hearted planter of Mount Vernon.

When the war came at last to teach its terrible, yet essential lessons, Mr. Houghton's eldest son was among the first to exercise the courage of the convictions which had always been instilled into his mind. The grim New Englander saw him depart with eyes that, although tearless, were full of agony, also of hatred of all that threatened to cost him so much. His worst fears were fulfilled, for his son was drowned in a night attack on Fort Sumter, and, in his father's morbid fancy, still lay in the mud and ooze at the bottom of Charleston harbor.

The region gained a strange fascination for the stricken man, and he at last resolved to live near his son's watery grave and take from the very hands of those whom he regarded as his boy's murderers the business which they might regard as theirs naturally. So he removed to Charleston, and employed his capital almost as an instrument of revenge. He did not do this ostentatiously, or in any way that would thwart his purpose or his desire to accumulate money, but his aims had come to be very generally recognized, and he received as much hate as he entertained. Yet his wealth and business capacity made him a power in commercial circles, and Southern men, who would no more admit him to their homes than they would an ogre, dealt with him in a cool politeness that was but the counterpart of his grim civility.

Captain Bodine knew that Mr. Houghton employed much help in his business. He knew that the work of many of his employés must be largely mechanical, requiring little or no intercourse with the master, and the veteran reasoned, "I could give him honest work, and he in return,

pay me my salary, we personally not being under the slightest social obligation to each other. I'd rather wring money from his hard fist than take it from the open hand of a too generous friend. I could then get bread for Ella and myself on the simple ground of services rendered."

He therefore entered the outer office and asked for Mr. Houghton. A clerk said, "He is very busy, sir. Cannot I attend to your matter?"

"I wish to see Mr. Houghton personally."

"Will you send in your card, sir?"

Captain Bodine took one from his pocket and wrote upon it, "I wish to see you briefly on a personal matter." A moment later he was ushered into Mr. Houghton's presence, who was writing rapidly at his desk. Bodine stood still, balancing himself on his crutches while the merchant finished the sentence. He looked at the hard wrinkled face and shock of white hair with the same steady composure that he had often faced a battery, as yet silent, but charged with fiery missiles.

At last Mr. Houghton looked up with an impatient word upon his lip, but checked it as he saw the striking figure before him. For an instant the two men looked steadily into each other's eyes. Ever since the war, Captain Bodine had dressed in gray, and Mr. Houghton knew instinctively that his visitor was a Confederate veteran. Then the captain's mutilation caught his attention, and his very manhood compelled him to rise and stiffly offer a chair.

"You wished to see me personally," he remarked, coldly. "I must request you to be brief, for I rarely allow myself to be disturbed at this hour."

"I will be brief. I merely come to ask if you have employment for a tolerably rapid, accurate penman?"

"Do you refer to yourself?" Mr. Houghton asked, his brow darkening.

"I do, sir."

"Do you think this a sufficient excuse for interrupting me at this hour?"

"Yes, sir."

Again there was a fixed look in each other's eyes, and Mr. Houghton, with his large knowledge of men and affairs, became more distinctly aware that he was not dealing with an ordinary character. He put his thought in words, for at times he could be very blunt, and he was conscious of an incipient antagonism to Bodine.

"You think you are a Southern gentleman, my equal, or rather, my superior, and entitled to my respectful consideration at any hour of the day."

"I certainly think I am a Southern gentleman. I do not for a moment think I am entitled to anything from you."

"Yet you come and ask a favor with as much dignity as if you represented the whole State of South Carolina."

"No, sir, I represent only myself, and I have asked no favor. There are many in your employ. I supposed your relations with them were those of business, not of favor."

"Well, sir," replied Mr. Houghton, coldly, "there are plenty with whom I can enter into such relations without employing an enemy of my country."

"Mr. Houghton, I will bring this interview to a close at once, and then you can settle the matter in a word. Your country will never receive any harm from me. I am one of a conquered people, and I have now no ambition other than that of earning bread for my child and myself. You have dealings with Southern men and ex-Confederate soldiers. You buy from them and sell to them. I, as one of them, ask nothing more than that you should buy my labor for what it is worth to you in dollars and cents. Regard my labor as a bale of cotton, and the case is simple enough."

The lava-crust over the crater of the old man's heart was breaking up, for the interview was recalling all the associations which centred around the death of his son. Captain Bodine evoked a strange mixture of antipathy and interest. There was something in the man which compelled his respect, and yet he seemed the embodiment of the spirit which the New Englander could neither understand nor

tolerate. His thought had travelled far beyond business, and he looked at his visitor with a certain wrathful curiosity. After a moment he said abruptly, "You fought through the war, I suppose?"

"I fought till I was disabled, sir, but I tried to do a soldier's duty to the close of the war."

"Duty!" ejaculated Mr. Houghton, with an accent of indescribable bitterness. "You would have killed my son if you had met him?"

"Certainly, if I met him in fair fight and he did not kill me first."

"There wasn't any fair fight at all," cried the old man passionately. "It was an atrocious, wicked, causeless rebellion."

The dark blood mounted to Captain Bodine's very brow, but he controlled himself by a strong effort, and only said calmly, "That is your opinion."

The veins fairly stood out on Mr. Houghton's flushed, usually pallid, face. "Do you know," he almost hissed, "that my boy lies at the bottom of your accursed harbor yonder?"

"I did not know it, sir. I do know that the sons of Southern fathers and the fathers themselves lie beside him."

"But what was the use of it all? Damn the whole horrible crime! What was the use of it all?"

A weaker, smaller-brained man than Bodine would have retorted vehemently in kind and left the place, but the captain was now on his mettle and metaphorically in the field again, with the foe before him. What is more, he respected his enemy. This Northern man did not belong to the ex-governor Moses type. He was outspoken and sincere to the heart's core in his convictions, and moreover that heart was bleeding in father-love, from a wound that could never be stanched. Bodine resolved to put all passion under his feet, to hold his ground with the coolness and tenacity of a general in a battle, and attain his purpose without the

slightest personal compromise. His indomitable pride led him to feel that he would rather work for this honest, implacable foe than for any man in the city, because their relations would be so purely those of business, and to bring him to terms now would be a triumph over which he could inwardly rejoice.

"Mr. Houghton," he said, gravely, "we have wandered far from the topic which I at first introduced. Your reference to your son proves that you have a heart; your management of business certifies to a large brain. I think our conversation has made it clear that we are both men of decided convictions and are not afraid to express them. If you were a lesser man than you are, I would have shrugged my shoulders contemptuously and left your office long ago. Yet I am your equal, and you know it, although I have scarcely a penny in the world. I am also as honest as you are, and I would work for you all the more scrupulously because you detest me and all that I represent. I, on the other hand, would not expect a single grain of allowance or consideration, such as I might receive from a kindly disposed employer. We would not compromise each other in the slightest degree by entering into the relations of employer and employed. I would obey your orders as a soldier has learned to obey. Apart from business we should be strangers. I knew we were hostile in our feelings, but I had the impression—which I trust may be confirmed—that you were not a commonplace enemy. The only question between us is, 'Will you buy my labor as you would any other commodity in the Charleston market?'"

Captain Bodine's words proved his keen appreciation of character. The old man unconsciously possessed the spirit of a soldier, and it had been evoked by the honest, uncompromising attitude of the Southerner. His emotion passed away. His manner became as courteous as it was cold and impassive. "You are right, sir," he said, "we are hostile and will probably ever remain so, but you have put things in a light which enables me to comply with your wishes. I

take you at your word, and will buy your labor as I would any other article of value. I know enough of life to be aware of the courtesy which occasionally exists between men whose feelings and beliefs strongly conflict, yet I agree with you that, apart from business, we can have little in common. When can you come?"

"To-morrow."

"Are you willing to leave the question of compensation open till I can learn what your services are actually worth?"

"I should prefer to have the question settled in that way."

Both men arose. "Good-morning, Captain Bodine," said the merchant, bowing slightly. "Good-morning, Mr. Houghton," and the captain halted quietly back to Mrs. Bodine's home of faded gentility.

Mr. Houghton sat down at his desk and leaned his head thoughtfully upon his hand. "I wouldn't have believed that I could have done this," he muttered. "If he had knuckled to me one iota I would have shown him the door; if he hadn't been so crippled—if he hadn't been so downright honest and brave—confound it! he almost made me feel both like killing him and taking him by the hand. Oh, Herbert, my poor, lost boy, I don't wonder that you and so many fine fellows had to die before such men were conquered."

CHAPTER XVII

FIRESIDE DRAMAS

ELLA was so overjoyed at her prospects when all had been explained to her, that she insisted on Mara's spending the evening at the Bodines' so that her father might understand the whole arrangement.

When she returned early in the afternoon, she found him, as Mara had before, reading quietly at one of the parlor windows. He looked up with not only glad welcome in his eyes, but also with much genuine interest, for he was anxious to learn what further impression Mara had made upon his daughter. The man who had accepted patient endurance as his lot, could scarcely comprehend the profound impression made upon him by the child of his old friend. He had made no effort to analyze his feelings, not dreaming that there was any reason why he should do this. To his mind circumstances and the girl herself were sufficient to account for the deepest sympathy. Then that look with which she had regarded him on the previous evening —he could never forget that while he lived. He therefore regarded Ella's flushed, happy face, and said, "You seem to hesitate in letting your experiences be known, but I reckon, from the sparkle of your eyes, that you have had a good time."

"Oh, papa, I have had a good time, so much more than a good time. I hesitate because I don't know just how or where to begin—how to tell you all the good news. Dear papa, you have had so many more troubles than I have, and some perhaps which you think I do not share in very

deeply. It was best for us both that I did not—too deeply. But you have a trouble now in which I do share more than you know, more than I wanted you to know. We were here dependent on our dear old cousin who is so unselfish that she would almost open her poor old veins for us. This was too hard for either of us to endure very long, and I had made up my mind that I would do something to relieve you—that if Mara could earn money I could."

"My dear child, I appreciate your feelings, and you have understood mine, but let me hasten to assure you that I have found a way by which I can support you and myself also."

"You have? So soon? Oh, that is glorious. Tell me all about it."

"No, indeed. Not till I have your wonderful news, and learn how you enjoyed your visit."

"No more visiting for me, or rather perpetual visiting. Oh, papa, think what bliss! I'm to help Mara, work with Mara every day, and have a share in the profits."

The captain's face grew sad and almost stern. Ella understood him instantly, and put her hand over his mouth as he was about to speak. "Now, papa, don't you perform the same little tragedy that I did. I know just how you feel and what you are going to say. Mara had it in her mind the moment she heard I was in town and—"

"Ella," interrupted her father, firmly, "I do not often cross you, but you must let me decide this question. Mara is capable of any degree of self-sacrifice, of even something like a noble deception in this case. No, this cannot be. I would protect that girl even as I would you, and you both need protection against your own generous impulses more than all else."

In vain she tried to explain, and recounted minutely all that had happened. The captain was so deeply touched that his eyes grew dim with moisture. Again he exclaimed, "Would to God Sidney Wallingford had lived, even though poor and crippled as I am, that he might have worshipped

this noble-hearted, generous girl. She has indeed a rare nature. She carried out her self-sacrificing purpose well, but I understand her better than you do, my dear. With all a woman's wit, tact, and heart she deceived you and would deceive us all. She would smile in triumph as she denied herself for our sakes what she most needed. But, Ella, you know we cannot let her do this."

The girl was staggered and in sore perplexity. Her father's view was not pleasing to her ingenuous nature; there had been a sincerity in Mara's words and manner which had been confirmed not only by circumstances, but also by Aun' Sheba's hearty approval. "I shall be sorry if what you think is true," she said, sadly. "I don't wish to be deceived, not even from such motives as you attribute to Mara, and, of course, she could have no others if you are right. But how can you be right? There was such a verity about it all. Why, papa, when at first I imagined that Mara might have thought I had been hinting in my very foolish talk that I wished what afterward took place, I was so overwhelmed with shame that I could hardly speak. If you had seen how she reassured me, and heard her earnest words, declaring she needed me—oh, if that was all deception, even from the kindest and noblest motive, I should be wounded to the heart, I could never be sure of Mara again and scarcely of any one else. I can't think as you do. Let us ask Cousin and see what she thinks."

The captain was now in perplexity himself, yet he held to his first impression. "I admit," he said, hesitatingly, "that it was not the wisest course on Mara's part, yet often the best people, especially when young, ardent, and a little morbid, are led by the noblest motives to do what is unwise and scarcely right. Mara is not an ordinary girl, and cannot be judged by common standards. Be assured, she would die rather than deceive you to your harm, but a purpose to do you good might confuse both her judgment and conscience, especially if it involved self-sacrifice on her part. You must not blame me if I wish to be more thoroughly

convinced. Yes, you can ask Cousin Sophy's opinion if you wish."

"Then come with me, papa, and state your case as strongly as you can. I'd rather go hungry than go forward another step if you are right."

The wise old lady, who could talk by the hour on most occasions, listened to both sides of the question and then remarked with sphinx-like ambiguity, "Your father, Ella, has obtained a remarkably correct idea of Mara's character. You know I told her in your hearing that she had a passion for self-sacrifice, and was prone to take a morbid sense of duty. At the same time, I do not by any means say he is right in this particular instance. Mara is coming this evening—let her satisfy you both in her own way. I have my opinion, but would rather she would make the matter plain to you."

The shrewd old lady, to whom the wheels of time often seemed to move slowly, was bent on a bit of drama at her own fireside, at the same time believing that a word, a tone, or even a glance from the young girl herself would have more power to banish the captain's doubts than anything she could say. "And yet," thought Mrs. Bodine, "Mara is capable of just this very kind of dissimulation."

Evening in the South differs slightly from our late afternoon, and the sun was scarcely below the horizon when Mara arrived under the escort of Mrs. Hunter, who had also been invited. Therefore Ella in her feverish impatience had not long to wait.

Mrs. Bodine's simple meal was over, and after having had a fire lighted on the parlor hearth, she had ensconced herself in a low rocking-chair in readiness to receive her guests. There was a sort of stately cordiality in the meeting between her and Mrs. Hunter, quiet courtesy on the part of Captain Bodine toward all, while honest Ella could not banish a slight constraint from her manner. Mara gradually became conscious of this and wondered at it. She also soon

observed that no reference was made to the compact of the morning, and this perplexed her still more.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Bodine, having all the dramatis personæ about her, was complacency embodied, and not averse to taking a part in the little play herself. She managed at first that the conversation should be general. She serenely indulged in reminiscences which waked others from Mrs. Hunter, and even the captain was beguiled into half-humorous old-time anecdotes about some one they all knew.

"Well," ejaculated Mrs. Bodine, sighing, "that—oh, good gracious! what was I going to say? Cousin Hugh, you can remember that my most excellent husband accustomed me to rather strong adjectives. Well, that hard-hearted old wretch, Mr. Houghton, eventually got all the property of the poor man we were talking about."

"Did he?" said the captain, quietly. "Well, I reckon I'll get some of it back again."

"You? I'd like to know how. He'd take your head off at one bite if he could."

"I reckon he would; he looked so inclined this morning. I spent half an hour alone with him this morning, and am going to work for him to-morrow."

The general exclamations amounted to a chorus, and Mrs. Hunter, bridling, began formally and almost severely, "Pardon me, Captain Bodine, I do not wish to be presuming or officious, but I fear you have been absent from the city so long that you are not aware of the general estimation in which this Northern carpet-bagger is held."

"I certainly have had a chance to form my own opinion of him, Mrs. Hunter, and I reckon that he and I will not be any better friends than he and you would be."

"Friends," ejaculated the old lady, "I could annihilate him. Oh, Captain Bodine, believe me, you have made a mistake. What will be left of our past if the best and bravest of our number strike hands with these vampires of the North?"

"I have not struck hands with him, nor do I ever expect to."

"Hugh, Cousin Hugh," protested Mrs. Bodine, "I don't understand this move at all."

"Papa," cried Ella, with her arms about his neck, "you have done this for my sake, so do please give it up for my sake. Some other way will be provided for us."

"Mara, are you, too, down on me?"

"No, sir, never; but I'll share my last crust with you if you will have nothing to do with that man."

"I thought so, you brave, generous girl. That was like your father, and reminds me of a bit of experience. We were on a forced march, and the provision train had not kept up. It was night, and we were too weary to hunt around for a morsel. Wallingford (he was major then) came to me and said, 'Bodine, I've a hard tack and one cup of coffee. We'll go halves,' and so we did. He was so impolite as to take his half first. Do you know why?"

"I can guess," she replied with downcast brimming eyes.

"I reckon you can—you of all others; but he didn't succeed. I turned on him in mock severity and remarked, 'Major Wallingford, I never thought you would try to overreach an old friend. See, you have scarcely taken over a third of the coffee and hard tack.' He slapped me on the back and declared he would have me arrested for insubordinate and disrespectful language. Considering what sleepy, jaded men we were, we had a lot of fun over that meagre banquet, but he had to yield even if he were my superior. I fear you are inclined to go halves just like your father."

"Well, Hugh," cried Mrs. Bodine impatiently, "even that is better than your taking whatever this—this—I want an adjective that is not too wicked."

"No matter, Cousin Sophy, we'll each supply one according to our own degree of wickedness: A Yankee would say 'darned' though, confound the fellows, they seem to learn to fight and swear in equal degrees."

"I won't say 'darned,'" said the old lady, almost trem-

bling in her irritation and excitement, for she was being treated to more of a drama than she had bargained for. "It is a word I never heard my husband use. Bah! all words are inadequate. I say anything is better than that you should go to this old Houghton for what little he may choose to give you."

"Now, I appeal to you, Mara—is this fair, four against one?"

"But, dear Captain Bodine, you don't know how deeply we feel about this."

"Ah, that is the charge our enemies bring against us. We *feel*, but don't reason, they say. We have much reason to retort, 'You reason, but have no feeling and little comprehension for those that have.' Come, I will be serious now," and his expression became grave and firm. "Cousin Sophy, Mr. Houghton will never give me a penny, nor would I take a gift from him even if starving, yet I have a genuine respect for the man. Let me, as a soldier, illustrate my course, and then I will explain more fully. Suppose I was on a march and was hungry. On one hand were ample provisions in the camp of the enemy; on the other a small farmhouse occupied by friends who had already been robbed of nearly all they had. If I went to these friends they would, as Mara has said, share their last crust. Do you not think it would be more in accordance with the feelings of a man to make a dash at the enemy's overflowing larder, and not only get what I needed but also bring away something for my impoverished friends? I reckon it would. I much prefer spoiling the Egyptians, cost me what it may. My dear child," turning to Mara, "do you think I would take half your crust when I know you need the whole of it? No, indeed. Then you must remember that we got in the habit of living off the enemy during the war. To drop all this figurative talk, let me put the matter in plain English, as I did to Mr. Houghton this morning. We had a pretty hot action, I can tell you. There was no compromise in word or manner on either side, but he listened to reason,

and so will you. Pick out your most blue-blooded, stanchest South Carolinians, in the city, and they deal with Mr. Houghton. They sell to him; they buy of him, and there it all ends. I have no cotton to sell, but I told him to regard my labor as a bale of cotton and to buy it, if he so wished, at what it was worth. I also told him that apart from our business relations we would be strangers, so you see I am neither better nor worse, practically, no different from other Charlestonians."

Mrs. Bodine leaned back in her chair, and laughed till the tears came into her eyes. "I do declare," she gasped: "God made men different from women, and I reckon He knew what He was about. I surrender, Cousin Hugh. Your argument has blown me out of the water. Spoil this old Egyptian to your heart's content, only remember when there are no Egyptians to spoil, if you don't come to your friends you will have one savage old woman to deal with."

Mrs. Hunter shook her head dubiously. "I don't know what to think of all this," she said. "It appears to me that it tends to break down the partition wall between us and those from whom we have received wrongs which should never be forgiven."

"My dear Mrs. Hunter," replied the captain, urbanely, "the more the partition wall is broken down in one sense, the better. Isn't it wiser for me to get money out of Mr. Houghton than to sulk and starve? I *had* to break through the wall to get bread. Of course," he added quietly, "we all understand one another. My military figures of speech must not be pressed too far. I do not propose to knock Mr. Houghton on the head, or even take the smallest possible advantage of him. On the contrary, because we are hostile, I shall be over-scrupulous, if possible, to do his work well. From him, as I told him, I expect not the slightest allowance, consideration, or kindness."

"Oh," thought Mara, "how clearly he has put my own thought and wish. Why could not Owen Clancy have

earned his own bread and mine by taking the course of this brave Southern man? I have been shown to-night how noble, how dignified and how easy it was. Why should he talk of love when he will not see what is so reasonable in the action of another?"

"Cousin Hugh, you said one thing which needs explanation. You said you had a respect for this man Houghton, who we all know has not a particle of good-will toward us."

"Chiefly because he is such an honest enemy," Bodine replied. "He makes hard bargains with our people when he can, but have you ever heard of his cheating or doing anything underhand? I learned a good deal about his business character while in Georgia, and his course to-day corresponded with what I had been told. Moreover, his feelings got the better of him, and he revealed in one passionate sentence that his eldest son was killed, and, as he says, lies at the bottom of our harbor here. This fact enabled me to stand better what I had to take from him," and in answer to his cousin's questions he revealed the substance of the interview. "I do this," he concluded, "that you and other friends may better understand my course. To-morrow Mr. Houghton becomes my employer, and I shall owe a certain kind of loyalty. The more seldom we mention his name thereafter, the better; and I shall never speak of him except in terms of cold respect."

"Since you have told me about his son," said Mrs. Bodine, "I won't avail myself of the privilege of freeing my mind to-night, even if it will be my last chance, that is when you are present. After all, why should I berate him? In one aspect he is to me a sort of ogre representing all that is harsh, intolerant and cruel, rejoicing in his power to drain the life-blood of a conquered and impoverished people; yet he rose before me as you spoke as a heart-broken father, warped and made unnatural by pain, haunted by the ghost of his son whom his arms cannot embrace. Sometimes when thinking alone, the people of the world seem like a lot of squabbling children, with only degrees

of badness and goodness between them. Children make no allowances for each other. It is like or dislike, quick and manifested. It is well there is a Heavenly Father over all who may lead one and all of us 'to make up' some day. I tell you what it is, Hugh, we may all have to shake hands in Heaven."

"Like enough, Cousin Sophy. In matters pertaining to Heaven you are a better authority than I am."

"For very good reason. Heaven is nearest those who feel its need most. You may think I am a queer Christian, and I sometimes think so myself—hating some people as near as I dare, and calling old Houghton a wretch. Don't I know about his heartache? Who better than I? God knows I would give his son back to him if I could. God knows I can almost swear at him; He knows also that if he were brought into this house wounded I'd nurse him with my feeble hand as I would you, Cousin Hugh, but I would be apt to say when he got well (and here came in her little chirping laugh), 'Good sir, I have not the slightest objection to your going back to Massachusetts, bag and baggage.' By the way, he has another son who has not been much in Charleston—being educated at the North, they say. He must be a grown man now. I was told that when here last he resented the fact bitterly that there was some society in town which he could not enter."

"I reckon not," remarked Mrs. Hunter, grimly, and then followed some desultory conversation between the two elder ladies.

As was frequently his custom—in common with men whose past is more than their future promises to be—the captain had lapsed into a train of thought which took him far away from present surroundings. He was roused by Mrs. Hunter's preparations for departure, and looking suddenly at Mara, saw that her eyes were filled with tears. He was at her side instantly, and, taking her hand, asked gently, "What troubles you, my child?"

With bowed head she replied: "I understand you, Cap-

tain Bodine; your words have made everything clear to me."

He still held her hand and thought a moment. "About Ella's coming to you?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm not one of the Egyptians, but I'd so set my heart on it."

"Because of *your* need, not Ella's?" again the captain queried, while his grasp on her hand tightened.

"Oh, Captain Bodine, do you think I could deceive you or a girl like Ella under any circumstances? If she did not come after to-day I feel that I should give up in despair very soon. I do need help, and just such help to body and mind as she can give me."

"Forgive me, Mara. The little story I told about your father explains why I feared. But we will say no more about it. I would rather have Ella with you than with any one else in the world."

"There," cried that buoyant young woman, "I knew I was right. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you old people are destined to learn wisdom."

"Well," said Mrs. Bodine, "I've had more drama to-night than I reckoned on, and I haven't been leading lady either. Will the chief baker escort me to the dining-room?"

After cake and cream, the captain escorted Mrs. Hunter and Mara home. He detained the latter at the door a moment, and said gently, "Mara, shun the chief danger of your life. Never be unfair to yourself."

CHAPTER XVIII

A FAIR DUELLIST

THE great hand of time which turns the kaleidoscope of human affairs appeared to move slowly for a few weeks, as far as the characters of my story are concerned. The two little bakers worked together daily, one abounding in mirth and drollery, and the other cheered, or rather beguiled from melancholy in spite of herself. Business grew apace, not only because two girls who evoked general sympathy were the principals of the firm, but also for the reason that they put something of their own dainty natures into their wares. Aun' Sheba trudged and perspired in moderation, for the fleet-footed Vilet seemed to outrun Mercury. Moreover, the "head-pahners," as Aun' Sheba called them, insisted that their commercial travellers should take the street-cars when long distances were involved.

Captain Bodine and Mr. Houghton maintained their business relation in the characteristic manner indicated by their first interview. The ex-Confederate was given some routine work which kept him at a remote desk a certain number of hours a day, and employer and employé rarely met, and scarcely ever spoke to each other. The captain, however, had no reason to complain of his salary, which was paid weekly, and sufficed for his modest needs. So far from being dependent on his large-hearted cousin, he and Ella were enabled to contribute much to her material comfort, and immeasurably to her daily enjoyment. She and Ella were in the sunshine again, and it was hard to say which

of the two talked the most genial nonsense. The old lady had what is termed "a sweet tooth," and loved dainties. The two girls, therefore, vied with each other in evolving rare and harmless delicacies.

"Two Ariels are ministering to me," she said, "and sometimes I feel so jolly that I would like to share with that old—I mean Mr. Houghton."

The girls never forgot, however, the depths beneath the ripple and sparkle of the old lady's manner.

As spring verged into summer, Uncle Sheba yielded more and more to the lassitude of the season. His "bob-scure 'fliction" seemed to grow upon him, if it were possible to note degrees in his malady, but Aun' Sheba said, " 'Long as he is roun' like a log an' don' bodder me I is use' ter it." He even began to neglect the "prar-meetin'," and old Tobe told him to his face, "You'se back-slidin' fur as you kin slide, inch or so." His son-in-law, Kern Watson, had won such a good reputation for steadiness that he was taken into the fire department. When off duty he was always with "Sissy an' de chilen."

Outwardly there was but slight change in Owen Clancy. He had never been inclined to make many intimate acquaintances, and those who knew him best only noted that he seemed more reserved about himself if possible, and that he was unusually devoted to business. Yet he was much spoken of in business circles, for it was known that he was the chief correspondent of the wealthy Mr. Ainsley of New York, who was making large investments in the South. Among the progressive men of the city, no matter what might be their political faith and association, the young man was winning golden opinions, for it was clearly recognized that he ever had the interest of his section at heart, that in a straightforward, honorable manner he was making every effort to enlist Northern capital in Southern enterprises. He had withdrawn almost wholly from social life, and ladies saw him but seldom in their drawing-rooms. When among men, however, he talked earnestly and sagaciously

on the business topics of the hour. The evening usually found him with book in hand in his bachelor apartment.

Beneath all this ordinary ebb and flow of daily life, changes were taking place, old forces working silently, and new ones entering in to complicate the problems of the future. As unobtrusively as possible, Clancy kept himself informed about Mara and all that related to her welfare. By some malign fate, as she deemed it, she would unexpectedly hear of him, encounter him on the street, also, yet rarely now, meet him at some small evening company. He would permit no open estrangement, and always compelled her to recognize him. One evening, to her astonishment and momentary confusion he quietly took a seat by her side and entered into conversation, as he might have done with other ladies present. By neither tone nor glance did he recognize any cause for estrangement between them, and he talked so intelligently and agreeably as to compel her admiration. His mask was perfect, and after an instant hers was equally so, yet all the time she was as conscious of his love as of her own.

He recognized the new element which the Bodines had brought into her life, and with a lover's keen instinct began to surmise what the captain might become to her. He was not long in discovering the former relations of the veteran to Colonel Wallingford, and he justly believed that, as yet, Mara's regard was largely the result of that old friendship and an entire accordance in views. But he was not so sure about Bodine, whom he knew but slightly and with whom he had no sympathy. He had learned substantially the ground on which the captain had taken employment from Mr. Houghton, and as we know, he was bitterly hostile to that whole line of policy. "It would eventually turn every Southern man into a clerk," he muttered, "when it is our patriotic duty to lead in business as in everything else that pertains to our section." Yet he knew, or at least believed, that if he had taken the same course Mara might now be his wife.

Sometimes, when reading, apparently, he would throw down his book and say aloud in his solitude, "Bah, I'm more loyal to the South than this sombre-faced veteran. He would keep his State forever in his own crippled condiiton. No crutches for the South, I say; no general clerkship to the North, but an equal onward march, side by side, to one national destiny. He thinks he is a martyr and may very complacently let Mara think so too. Who has given up the more? He a leg, and I my heart's love!"

It has already been shown that Clancy touched the extremes of political and social life in the city. Some, of whom Mrs. Hunter was an exasperated exponent, could be cold toward him, but they could neither ignore nor despise him. Those beginning to cast off the fetters of enmity and prejudice, secretly admired him and were friendly. While cordial in his relations, therefore, with Northern people and Northern enterprises of the right stamp, he had not so lost his hold on Mara's exclusive circle as to remain in ignorance of what was transpiring within it, and he secretly resolved that if Bodine sought to take the girl of his heart from him, and, as he truly believed, from all chance of true happiness herself, he would give as earnest a warning as ever one soul gave to another.

In June he received a strong diversion to his thoughts. Mr. Ainsley wrote him from New York, in effect, that he with his daughter would soon be in Charleston—that his interests in the South had become so large as to require personal attention; also that he had new enterprises in view. The young man's interest and ambition were naturally kindled. As Mara had taken the Bodines and their affairs as an antidote for her trouble, he sought relief in the preoccupation which the Ainsleys might bring to his mind. Accordingly he met father and daughter at the station and escorted them to the hotel with some degree of pleasurable excitement.

Miss Ainsley made the same impression of remarkable beauty and cosmopolitan culture as at first. There was a

refined, easy poise in her bearing. Indeed he almost fancied that, to her mind, coming to Charleston was a sort of condescension, she had visited so many famous cities in the world. She greeted him cordially, and to a vain man her brilliant eyes would have expressed more than the mere pleasure of seeing an old acquaintance again.

But few days elapsed before Mr. Ainsley was on the wing, here and there where his interests called him, meantime making the Charleston hotel his headquarters. Miss Ainsley's friend, Mrs. Willoughby, carried off the daughter to her pretty home on the Battery, where sea-breezes tempered the Southern sun. Clancy aided the father satisfactorily in business ways, and the daughter found him so agreeable socially as to manifest a wish to see him often. She interested him as a "*rara avis*" which he felt that he would like to understand better, and he would have been less than a man if not fascinated by her beauty, accomplishments and intelligence. Miss Ainsley could not fail to charm the eyes of sense as well, and she was not chary of the secret that she had been fashioned in one of Nature's finest molds. The soft, warm languor of the summer evenings was, to her, ample excuse for revealing the glowing marble of her neck and bosom to dark Southern eyes, and admirers began to gather like bees to honey ready made.

Clancy had wished to see her deportment toward other young men, and now had the opportunity. The result flattered him in spite of himself. To others she was courteous, affable and sublimely indifferent. When he approached it seemed almost as if a film passed from her eyes, that she awakened into a fuller life and became an enchantress in her versatile powers. He responded with as fine a courtesy as her own, although quite different, but there was a cool, steady self-restraint in eyes and manner which piqued and charmed her.

Clancy would be long in learning to understand Miss Ainsley. He might never reach the secret of her life, and certainly would not unless he bluntly asked her to marry

him—asked her so bluntly and persistently that all the wiles of which woman is capable opened no avenue of escape. She was an epicure of the finest type. If she had been asked to a banquet on Mount Olympus, she would have preferred to dine from the one delicious dish of ambrosia most to her taste and to sip only the choicest brand of nectar. Profusion, even at a feast of the gods, would have no charms for her. She had begun to see the world so early and had seen so much of it that she had learned the art of elimination to perfection. Sensuous to the last degree, but not sensual, she had a cool self-control and a fineness of taste which led her to choose but a few refined pleasures at a time and then to enjoy them deliberately and until satiety pointed to a new choice. Keen of intellect, she had studied society and with almost the skill of a naturalist had recognized the various types of men and women. This cool observation had taught her much worldly wisdom. She saw all about her, mere girls jaded with life already, faded young women keeping up with the fashionable procession as fagged out soldiers drag themselves along in the rear of a column. She had seen fresh young *débutantes* rush into the giddy whirl to become pallid from the excess of one season. At one time, she and other friends of hers had been exultant, excited and distracted by their many admirers and suitors. She soon wearied, however, of this indiscriminate slaughter, and the devoted eager attentions, the manifest desires and hopes of commonplace men, so far from kindling a sense of triumph and power, almost made her ill. She became like a knight of the olden time who had hewn down inferiors until he was sick of gore.

And so she gradually withdrew from the fashionable rout, took time for reading and study and the perfection of her accomplishments. She accepted merely such invitations as were agreeable to her, smiling contemptuously at the idea that in order to maintain position in society one must wear herself out by rushing around to everything; and society respected her all the more. It became a tri-

umph to secure her presence; but she only went where everything would accord with her taste and inclination. This was true of her life abroad as well as at home. Conscious of her father's wealth, and that, apart from an unexacting companionship to him, she could do as she pleased, she proposed to make the most of life as she estimated it. She would have all the variety she wished, but she would take it leisurely. She would not perpetrate the folly of gulping pleasures, still less would she permit herself to fall tumultuously in love with some ordinary man only to waken from a romantic dream to discover how ordinary he was.

She was also too shrewd, indeed one may almost say too wise, to think of an ambitious marriage. The man of millions or the man of rank or fame could never buy her unless personally agreeable to her. Yet she was rarely without a suitor, whom to a certain point she encouraged. Unless a man possessed some real or fancied superiority which pleased or interested her, she was practically inaccessible to him. She would be courtesy itself, yet by her strong will and tact would speedily make a gentleman understand, "You have no claim upon me; your wishes are nothing to me." If he interested her, however, if she admired him even slightly, she would give him what she might term *a chance*. Then to her mind their relations became much like a duel; she at least would conquer him; he might subdue her if he could; she would give him the opportunity, and if he could find a weak place in her polished armor and pierce her heart she would yield. The question was whether she had a heart, and she was not altogether sure of this herself. On one thing, however, she was resolved—she would not give up her liberty, ease and epicurean life for the duties, obligations and probable sorrows of wifehood, unless she met a man who had the power to make this course preferable.

During Clancy's visit to New York in the winter, Mr. Ainsley had spoken of him to his daughter in terms that interested her before she even saw the young man, and the

moment the experienced woman of the world (for she was a woman of the world, though but little past her majority) looked upon him she was still more interested, recognizing at a glance the truth that whatever Clancy might be, he was not commonplace. This explains why he was perplexed by the intentness and soft fire of her eyes. If the way opened, she was inclined to give him "a chance." It might cost him dear, as it had others, but that was his affair. She felt that he was highly honored and distinguished in being given what she contemptuously denied to the great majority. The way *had* opened. She was in Charleston, and now, this particular and lovely June evening found her on a balcony overlooking the shining ripples of the bay, reclining in a cane chair with her head leaning against a pillar and her eyes fixed on him with all the dangerous fascination they possessed. Some soft, white clinging material draped her form that was rendered more graceful than usual by her well-chosen attitude. A spray from an ivy vine hung above her, and its slightly moving shadow flickered on her throat and bosom. She knew she was entrancingly beautiful; so did he. He felt that if he were an artist nothing was left to be desired. As a man he was flattered with her preference and charmed with her beauty. He did not and could not believe that he had more than a passing interest in her mind as yet, and he felt that she would never be more to him than a gifted lovely friend, who could at one and the same time gratify his taste and bestow fine intellectual companionship. They talked freely with lapses of silence between them. These she would occasionally break with little snatches of song from some opera. Her familiarity with life abroad enabled her to say much which supplemented his reading and which interested him. So he was not averse to these interviews and was conscious of no danger.

To her they had an increasing pleasure. She was delighted that Clancy thawed so deliberately, that instead of speedily verging toward sentiment he found more pleasure in her intellectuality than in her outward beauty. So many

others to whom she had given a chance had quickly lost both their heads and hearts, and she was beginning to rejoice in the belief that it might require a summer's tactics to beguile him of either. His gray eyes, which appeared dark in the moonlight, were clearly regarding her with quiet admiration, but instead of paying a compliment he would broach some topic so interesting in itself that before she knew it she was talking well and even brilliantly.

This present evening he did pay her a compliment, however, which delighted her. She had stated her view of a subject, and he had replied, "I must differ with you most decidedly, Miss Ainsley." Then he added with a little apologetic laugh, "I could have made such a remark to very few ladies. I would have said, 'I beg your pardon, do not think I am contradicting you, but possibly on further reflection—' In brief, I would have gone through the whole conventional circumlocution. You are a woman of mind, and you put your views so strongly and clearly that I forget everything except your thought. Good reason why, your thought is so interesting, all the more so because it is your view, not mine, and because I do not agree with you. Have I made sufficient apology?"

"You have done much more, Mr. Clancy, you have paid me the only kind of a compliment that I enjoy. I am sick of conventionalities, and as for ordinary compliments, I am as satiated as one would be if the entire contents of Huyler's candy-shop had been sent to him."

"Oh, I knew that much before I had seen you five minutes. The only question in my mind was whether you had not been made ill mentally by them as one would be physically by the candy."

"In other words, whether I was a fool or not."

"Precisely."

"Well?"

"No need of that rising inflection. If you were a fool I would not be here."

"I reckon not, as you say in the South."

"Yet you value your beauty, Miss Ainsley."

"Indeed I do, very highly."

"And you know equally well that I admire it greatly, but I value your power of companionship more. Why should not a man and woman entertain each other without compliments, conventionalities and sentimentalities?"

"No reason in the world if they are capable of such companionship. The trouble with so many is that they tumble into these things, especially the last, as if they were blind ditches in their path."

"That is excellent. Do you regard love as a blind ditch?"

"The deepest and worst of them all, judging from the experiences of very many."

"I am inclined to agree with you," he answered very quietly.

A few moments later he rose to take his leave. She gave him her hand without rising, and said, "Good-night. I'm not going to leave this lovely scene till I am sleepy. Come again when you want companionship. Drop conventionality. I would like a friend who would talk to me as men of brains talk to men of brains, without circumlocution."

"Very well, then, I shall begin at once. You have a head that ought to inspire an artist, but I like its furniture. I am going to read up on our point of disagreement. If I actually prove you are wrong you must yield like a man."

"I will."

The smile on her lips still lingered as she looked out upon the moonlit waters, and she passed into a delicious revery. At last she murmured, "Yes, he has a chance. I don't know how it will end. I may yield to his argument, but as to yielding to him, that is another affair. The best part of it all is that he is so slow in yielding to me. Here, in this out-of-the-way corner of the world, is a cup that I can at least drain slowly."

Clancy sauntered up Meeting Street, his thoughts pre-

occupied with the interview. Then half a block in advance two persons entered the thoroughfare, and he recognized Captain Bodine and Mara. He crossed the street so as not to meet them, and they passed in low, earnest conversation. If Miss Ainsley had been in the furthest star, he would not have cared. Every drop of his Southern blood was fired, and, with clinched hands, he strode homeward, and passed a sleepless night.

CHAPTER XIX

A CHIVALROUS IMPULSE

IT must be admitted that Clancy had some cause for his perturbation. Captain Bodine was a middle-aged man, who had had deep, if not wide experiences. He had come to regard himself as saddened and way-worn, halting slowly down the westward slope of life, away from the exaltations of vanished joys, and the almost despairing grief of former sorrows.

Memory kept both in sharp outline; nevertheless they were receding, as do hills and mountains which the traveller leaves behind him. The veteran had believed that he had no future besides earning an honest living, and providing for his beloved child.

The traveller—to employ again the figure—often journeys forward in what promises to be a monotonous road. He is not expecting anything, nor is he looking forward to any material change. Unawares he surmounts a little eminence, and there opens a vista which kindles his dull eyes with its beauty, and stirs his heavy heart with the suggestion that he has not passed by and beyond all the best things of life.

Mara's glance of profound and intelligent sympathy had opened such a vista to Bodine's mental vision. It had been enough then; it had been enough since, in the main, that she was the daughter of his old and dearest friend, and that their thoughts, beliefs and sorrows were in such complete accord. Mara had become his daughter's closest friend, as well as co-laborer, and so he heard of her daily, and saw her

very often. All that he saw and heard confirmed and deepened his first impressions. A companionship, wonderfully sweet and cheering, was growing between them. He had not yet begun to analyze this, or to recognize whither it was tending, while not a shadow of suspicion crossed her mind. She only felt that she had found a friend who diverted her thoughts, solaced all her trouble, and made the past, to which she believed she belonged, more real, more full of precious memories. The days in the main were passing quietly and evenly for both, full of work and deeply interesting thoughts, and the delightful reunions around the chair of the genial invalid, Mrs. Bodine, increased in number.

The old lady talked and acted as if she had emerged into the warmest sunshine of prosperity, and only Ella could surpass her in blitheness of spirit and comical speeches. They caricatured each other, every one, everything, yet without a particle of malice. Even poor old Mrs. Hunter sometimes had to relax her grim rigidity, and Bodine often laughed with the hearty ring of his old campaigning days. At times Mara was beguiled into the belief that she was happy, that her deep wound was healing. The illusion would last for days together; then something unexpected would occur, and the love of her heart would reveal itself in bitter out-cry against its wrong. If she could only see Clancy in some light which her veritable God-bestowed conscience could condemn, she believed that her struggle would be much easier; but he always confronted her with his earnest, steady eyes, which said, "I have as true a right to think as I do, as you have to think differently. Not even for your sake will I be false." Thus after days of comparative peace, the tempest would again rage in her soul.

Buoyant, happy Ella felt now as if she could trip on through life indefinitely; but one summer morning she tripped into a little adventure which brought unwonted expressions of perplexity into her fair face. She was returning along the shady side of the street from her duties, her face like a blush-rose from the heat, when she observed

coming toward her a young man who, from his garb and bearing, caught her eyes. Pretty Ella knew she attracted a great deal of attention from the opposite sex when she appeared in the street, and she was not such a demure little saint as to let a fine, manly figure pass without her observation, but her observance was quick, furtive, like the motion of a bird's eye that looks you over before you are aware of the bird's presence. No staring fellow ever met her blue eyes in the street. On the present occasion the little maiden said to herself, "There's a style of a man I haven't seen, and he's evidently a Northerner, too. Well, he's not bad; indeed he is the best-looking Vandal, as Mrs. Hunter would say— Oh, merciful Heaven! that old woman will be run over."

Her commentary had been interrupted by an express wagon driven recklessly around the corner. Picking her way slowly across the street was a plain, respectable looking old woman, with a basket of parcels on her arm, and, at the moment of Ella's cry, she was almost under the horse's feet, paralyzed with terror. Her cry caught the young man's attention. With a single bound, he was in the street, his right hand and arm forcing the horse back on its haunches, while with his left he gathered up the old woman. Then by a powerful effort he threw the horse's head and forequarters away from him with such force that the shafts cracked. Bearing the woman to the sidewalk, he placed her upon her feet, then went back, picked up her parcels and placed them in her basket. Without waiting to hear her thanks, he lifted his hat and was turning away as if all had been a trifle, when he was confronted by the enraged expressman pouring forth volleys of vituperation. With a chivalric impulse the girl drew nearer the stranger, who looked the bully steadily in the eyes while he kept his hands in his pockets. The man made a gesture as if to strike. Instantly the young fellow's left arm was up in the most scientific attitude of self-defence. "Don't do that, you fool," he said. "Are you too drunk not to see that

I'm strong? Clear out, or I'll have you arrested. If you touch me, I'll knock you under the feet of your horse."

There was something in the athlete's bearing, and the way he put up his left arm, which brought the expressman to his senses, and he drew off swearing about the blanked "Northerners, who acted as if they owned the city."

George Houghton—for we may as well give his name at once—regarded the fellow contemptuously an instant, and again turned to pursue his way regardless of the gathering crowd. But his attention was at once arrested by a pair of blue eyes which were so eloquent with admiration and approval, that he smiled and again lifted his hat.

"You are a gentleman," Ella breathed softly, the words coming with scarcely any volition on her part.

A frown instantly darkened Houghton's face, and, with a slight, stiff acknowledgment, he strode away. "Why the deuce shouldn't I be a gentleman!" he muttered. "The very young girls of this town are taught to look upon Northerners as boors. One has only to save an old woman from being run over, face a blackguard, and the wondering expression is wrung from one of the blue-blooded scions, 'You're a gentleman!' And she was blue-blooded. A fellow with half an eye and in half a minute could see that. And I suppose she thought that one of my ilk was no more capable of such a deed than Toots or Uriah Heep. Bah!"

Having thus relieved his mind, young Houghton's step soon grew slower and slower. It was evident that a new and different train of thought had begun in his mind. At last, with characteristic force, he communed with himself:

"Thin-skinned fool! why didn't I look at the girl instead of thinking of my blasted self and pride! Why, that girl's face will haunt me for many a day, whether I ever see her again or not. I'm as bad as these Bourbons themselves in my prejudice. Now I think of it she stood almost alone at my side when others were keeping at a safer distance, fearing a fight. Her look was one of simple, ingenuous approval—almost the expression of a child, and I acted like

a brute. That's the Old Harry with me, I act first and think afterward."

A few minutes later he was at the office, and writing rapidly at his father's dictation. After a time Mr. Houghton said, "Take these two letters to Bodine's desk, and tell him to make copies. Then you can go, George. Your vacation is too new for me to take so much of your time."

"See here, father," replied the young man, putting his hand on the old gentleman's shoulder. "You've been here all these years working like thunder to make money, and I've been spending it like thunder. If you're going to keep on working, I'm going to work with you; if you'll knock off and go on a lark with me, I'll guarantee that you'll be ten years younger before fall."

The old man's face softened wonderfully. Indeed one could scarcely imagine it was capable of such an expression.

"Ah, George! you don't, you can't know," he said, "yet my heart is not so dead but that I feel and recognize the spirit in which you speak. My place is here, right here, and I should not be contented anywhere else. But you are just from your studies. You didn't dazzle the faculty by your performances. Perhaps they would say you were a little too much given to boating and that sort of thing. But I am satisfied that you have come home a man, and not a blue-spectacled milk-sop. Help me out a little, and then go off on your lark yourself and recuperate."

"Recuperate!" and the young fellow made the office ring with his laugh. "Feel of that muscle, old gentleman. All the recuperation I need I can get a few hours before and after sundown. I'll go now, however, for there's a spanking breeze on the bay, and I'd like to make a run around Fort Sumter."

"George, George, be prudent. You know that your brother lies at the bottom of that accursed bay."

"There, father, there, he died doing his duty like a man, and you mustn't grieve for him so. Good-by."

The old man looked wistfully after him a moment, then

turned his mind, like a strong motor power, to the complicated machinery that was coining wealth.

George went to Bodine, whom he had never seen before, and of whom he knew nothing, and began in his half-boyish way: "Here, mine ancient, father wants— Beg your pardon. Didn't know that you had lost a leg."

"What is it that Mr. Houghton wishes?" said the captain coldly, and turning upon the young man a visage which impressed him instantly.

"I beg your pardon again," said George. "My father would like copies made of these letters;" and he touched his hat as he turned away.

"Thunder!" he muttered as he left the counting-house. "I was told that I was a gentleman for a little trumpery act in the street. That man tells you he is one by a single glance from his sad, stern eyes. He is another of the blue-bloods, Southerner to the backbone. How is it that he is in the old gentleman's employ, I wonder? I supposed father hated ex-Confederates as the Devil does holy water. Bodine, Bodine. I must find out who he is, for he evidently has a history."

He soon forgot all about Bodine in the pleasure of skilfully sailing his boat close to the wind.

Ella had pursued her way homeward with bowed head and a confused sense of shame and resentment. "Suppose I did speak to him, a stranger," she murmured, "was he so dull, or so cold and utterly conventional as to make no allowance for the circumstances? No matter, I've had a lesson that I shall never forget. Hereafter he and his kind may save all the old women in Charleston, and fight all the bullies, and I won't even look at them. If he had had the brains and blood of a frog even, he would have understood me. And he did seem to understand at first, for he smiled pleasantly and lifted his hat. Does he consider it an insult to be told he is a gentleman? Perhaps he thought this fact should be too apparent to be mentioned, or else he thought it bold and unmaidenly to open my lips

at all. A plague on him for not being able to see the simple truth. No Southerner would have been so stupid, or ready to think evil."

Thus she communed with herself till she reached her own room. After a little thought, she decided not to speak of the adventure. She had an unusual share of common-sense, and knew that the affair would only give pain to her father and cousin, and that its relation would serve no earthly good to any one.

CHAPTER XX

THE STRANGER EXPLAINS

THERE are those who touch our life closely, and become essentially a part of it; there are many more who are but casual and passing acquaintances, and yet these very people often unconsciously become the most important factors in our destiny. Ella Bodine was soon to prove this truth. It will of course be understood that her life was not so secluded and restricted that she practically had no acquaintances beyond the characters of our story. Sensible Mrs. Bodine had no intention that her pretty cousin should be hidden behind the prejudices so powerful in those with whom she was immediately associated.

"Cousin Hugh," she said, one day soon after Ella's encounter with Houghton, "how was it with you when you were a young fellow? how was it with me when I was a girl? Do you suppose your daughter is made of different flesh and blood? She is so unselfish in nature and sunny in temperament that you will never learn from her that she has longings for society of her own age. We have no right to keep her among our shadows. We belong to the past; she has a future, and should have the chance which is the right of every young girl. You must not judge her by Mara, who stands by herself, and is not a representative of any ordinary type. She is as old as you are, and a great deal older than I am. She has grown up among shadows and loves them. Ella loves the sunshine, and should have all of it that we can give her. Now, you must let her go out more. I will choose her chaperons, and I reckon I know

whom to choose. If I do say it, I would like you to mention any one in Charleston more competent. I know about the fathers and mothers, the grandfathers and grandmothers, and the remote ancestors of every one in Charleston who *is* any one."

"Cousin Sophy, I believe you are right. I have permitted Ella to be too devoted to me, but we have lived such a precarious life of late—indeed it has been the vital question how we were to live at all. We are now very differently situated. Yes, you are right. Ella should see something of society, and enjoy some of its pleasures, and, as you say, should have her chance." At these final words he sighed deeply.

"I know what that sigh means," resumed the old lady. "You would wish to keep Ella to yourself always—the natural impulse of a father's heart. Yet if you allow this impulse to control you, it will become selfishness of the worst kind. I say again that every girl should have her chance to see and be seen, and to make the most and best of her life according to woman's natural destiny. You may trust me, as I have said, to choose those who shall have the care of Ella when she goes out. She has an invitation to a little company at Mrs. Willoughby's, and a most discreet friend has offered to chaperon her. We'll fix her out so that she will appear as well as any one, and you know our claims don't rest on expensiveness of dress. Mrs. Willoughby comes of one of the oldest and best families in the State. I know she is liberal, and affiliates with Northern people more than I could wish, but they are all said to be of the best class—and I suppose there is a best class among 'em. Good Lor', Hugh! we may feel and think as we please, and can never change, but we can't keep back the rising tide. If there are a few Northern people present Ella won't be contaminated any more than you are by working among Northern people. We have our strong prejudices—that's what they are called—but we must not let them make us ridiculous. Mrs. Willoughby says she's

emancipated, and that she'd have whom she pleased in her parlors. She has been abroad so much, you know. Well, well, we'll consider it settled." And so it was.

When Ella was informed of her cousin's plan in her behalf she was half wild with delight. "I may consider myself a débutante," she said. "Oh, Cousin Sophy! how shall I behave?"

"Behave just as a bird flies," said the wise old lady. "If you put on any airs, if you are not your own natural self, I'll shake you when you come home."

The captain saw his child's pleasure, and felt anew the truth of his cousin's words. Ella should be immured no longer. Mara had been invited also, but declined, preferring to spend the evening with Mrs. Bodine.

Mrs. Willoughby's company was not large, and had been selected from various motives. We need mention but one that had influenced her. Miss Ainsley had requested that George Houghton should be invited. Her father and Mr. Houghton had large business interests in common, and at Mr. Ainsley's request the young man had called upon his daughter. She was pleased with him, although she felt herself to be immeasurably older than he. Mrs. Willoughby had also been favorably impressed by his fine appearance and slightly brusque manner.

"Yes," said the astute Miss Ainsley, as they were talking him over after his departure, "he's a big, handsome, finely educated boy, who would walk through your Southern conventionalities as if they were cobwebs, had he a chance."

"Delightful!" cried Mrs. Willoughby. "If I can keep my drawing-room free from insipidity, I am content. As to his walking through our conventionalities, as you term them, let him try it. If he doesn't butt his head against some rather solid walls, I'm mistaken. You don't half know what a bold thing I am doing when I invite old Houghton's son; but then it is just this kind of social temerity that enchants me, and he shall come. I only hope

that some good people won't rise up and shake off the dust of their feet."

"Don't worry; you're a privileged character. Mr. Clancy has told me all about it. He admires you immensely because you are so untrammelled."

"He admires you a hundred-fold more. What are you going to do with him?"

"I don't know. I couldn't do anything with him yet. That's his charm. If I didn't know better, I should say he was the coldest—he is not cold at all. The woman who reaches his heart will find a lot of molten lava. I'm often inclined to think it has been reached by some one else, and that his remarkable poise results from a nature fore-armed, or else chilled by a former experience. At any rate, there is a fire smouldering in his nature, and when it breaks out it won't be of the smoky, lurid sort that has so often made me ill. There will be light and heat in plenty."

"Well, you're an odd girl, Caroline. You experiment with men's hearts like an old alchemist, who puts all sorts of substances into his crucible in the hope of finding something that will enrich him."

"And probably, like the old alchemist, I shall never find anything except what, to me, is dross."

Under Mrs. Robertson's wing Ella appeared, and met with a very kindly reception. She had not Miss Ainsley's admirable ease, but she possessed something far better. There was a sweet girlish bloom in addition to her innately refined manner and ingenuous loveliness of face, which made even the experienced belle sigh that she had passed by that phase forever. Yet shrewd Ella's eyes were as busy as they were intelligent. She wondered at Miss Ainsley with mingled admiration and distrust, but she had received a sufficient number of hints from Mrs. Bodine to understand her hostess quite well. She saw Clancy enter, and Miss Ainsley's welcome, and quickly observed that there was a sort of free-masonry between them. Then some one appeared who almost took away her breath. It was the

stranger to whom she had spoken so unexpectedly, even to herself. She saw that Mr. Clancy, Miss Ainsley, and Mrs. Willoughby greeted him cordially, but that many others appeared surprised and displeased. Little time was given to note more, for the stranger's eyes fell upon her. He instantly turned to his hostess, and evidently asked for an introduction. With a slight sparkle of mischief in her eyes, Mrs. Willoughby complied, and Ella saw the stranger coming toward her as straight and prompt as if he meant to carry her off bodily. He seemed to ignore every one and everything else in the room, but she was too high-spirited to fall into a panic, or even to be confused. Indeed she found herself growing angry, and was resolving to give him a lesson, when his name was mentioned. Then she was startled, and for an instant confused. This was no other than the son of "that old—Mr. Houghton," as Mrs. Bodine always mentioned him, with a little cough of self-recovery as if she had been on the perilous edge of saying something very unconventional. His father was her father's employer, and the instinctive desire to save her father from trouble led to hesitation in her plan of rebuke and retaliation. Her petty resentment should not lead to any unpleasant complications, and she therefore merely bowed civilly.

Houghton repeated her name as if a victim of momentary surprise himself, and then said with his direct gaze, "I wish to ask ten thousand pardons."

"That is a great many. I shall have to think about granting one."

"If I were you I wouldn't do it," was his next rather brusque remark.

"That is your advice, then?"

"No, indeed. I'm not my own worst enemy. Miss Bodine, circumlocution is not my forte. I had not walked a block away from you the other day before I charged myself with being a fool and a brute. It took just that long for me to get it into my thick head what your manner and

words meant, and I've been in a rage with myself ever since."

"Well," she asked, looking down demurely, "what did they mean?"

"They meant you were a brave girl—that from a chivalric impulse you had drawn near when even men stood a little aloof, as if fearing that if the affair came to blows, they might get a chance one themselves. Your face had the frank expression of a child—how often in fancy I've seen it since!—the words came from your lips almost as a child would speak them. Now that I see you again I know how true my second thoughts were of you and of myself. I deserve a whipping instead of your pardon."

There was a point yet to be cleared up in Ella's mind, and she remarked coldly, "I do not see how you could have had any other thoughts than what you term your second thoughts."

"Nor do I, now; and I suppose you can have no mercy on a poor fellow who is often hasty and wrong-headed. I will make a clean breast of it. I was charmed with your expression when first aware of your presence, but when you spoke you touched a sore spot. Miss Bodine, you would not be ostracized at the North. You would be treated with the courtesy and cordiality to which every one would see you to be entitled. Practically I am ostracized here by the class to which you belong. When you spoke I stalked away like a sulky boy, muttering, 'Why shouldn't I be a gentleman?' Even the girls in this town are taught to look upon Northerners as boors. I had only to pick up an old woman, and face a bully, when, as if in utter surprise that one of my ilk should be so grandly heroic, I heard the words, 'You are a gentleman.' You see it was my wretched egotism that got me into the scrape. When I thought of you, not myself, I saw the truth at once, and felt like going back to the expressman and meekly asking him to give me a drubbing."

All was clear to Ella now. Indeed there was a frank-

ness and sincerity about Houghton which left no suspicion of dark corners and mental reservations. As his explanation proceeded she began to laugh. "Well," she remarked, "I had my first thoughts too. I said to myself, as I pursued my way homeward, with burning cheeks, that you or any one else might save all the old women in town, and fight all the bullies, and that I would pass on my way without looking to the right or left."

"Pardon me, Miss Bodine, you are mistaken. Your generous spirit would get the better of you again in two seconds. Heaven grant, however, that next time you may have a gentleman as your ally. For a few moments I ceased to be one, and became an egotistical fool."

"You are too hard upon yourself. Since you interpret me so kindly it would ill become me to—"

"Ella, my dear," said her chaperon, "let me present to you Mr. Vandeveer."

Houghton gave her a bright, grateful glance, rose instantly, and bowed himself away.

Mrs. Robertson had been on pins and needles over this prolonged conference. There was something so resolute about Houghton's manner, and he had placed his chair so adroitly to bar approach to Ella, that the good lady was in sore straits. Mrs. Willoughby saw her perplexity, and felt not a little mischievous pleasure over it. She disappeared that she might not be called upon to interfere. At last in desperation Mrs. Robertson laid hold on Mr. Vandeveer, and ended the ominous interview.

Ella gave rather lame attention to her new companion's commonplaces; then others were introduced, and the evening was drifting away in the ordinary fashion. She soon began to talk well in her own bright way, and had all the attention a young débutante could desire, but she was always conscious of Houghton's presence, and also aware that he was quietly observant of her. She saw that he met with very little cordiality, and that from but a few. Womanlike, she began to take his part in her thoughts, and to feel

the injustice shown him. She had an innate sense of fair play, and she resented the manœuvring of her chaperon to keep him away from her. Yet she soon found herself enjoying abundantly the conversation of such young men as met with Mrs. Robertson's approval. This truth was apparent to that lady's satisfaction, but the independent young woman was not long in resolving that if she went into society she would not go as a child in leading-strings, and she determined that she would speak to Houghton again before the evening was over, if the opportunity offered. He had at last disappeared, but she soon discovered that he was on the balcony with Clancy and Miss Ainsley. Strolling past them with her escort, she heard enough of their bright, merry talk to wish that she had a part in it. It was her nature, however, to avoid him until she could speak under the eye of her chaperon, and she again entered the lighted drawing-room.

Houghton, meanwhile, had been doing some thinking himself. The girl, whose blue eyes had looked at him so approvingly in the street, was taking a stronger hold on his fancy every moment. The relaxation of her cold aspect into mirthfulness, and an approach to kindness had enchanted him; while her ardent, honest, fearless nature appealed to him powerfully. "She strikes me as a woman who would stand by a fellow through thick and thin as long as he was right," he thought, "and if my judgment is correct the whole ex-Confederate army shan't keep me from getting acquainted with her. Ah! how I liked that severe look in her eyes till she knew what my first thoughts were! She *has* blue blood of the right sort, and I'm sorely mistaken if it doesn't feed a brain that can think for itself."

He also returned to the drawing-room, and was vigilant for an opportunity. It soon occurred. Ella and her attendant were chatting with Mrs. Willoughby a little apart from the others. Houghton joined them instantly, and was encouraged when both the ladies greeted him with a smile. The attendant gentleman soon withdrew, the hostess re-

mained a few moments longer, and then Houghton and Ella were alone.

"You may have observed," he said, "the penalty I pay for being a Northerner."

"Yes," she replied, "and I don't think it's fair."

"Miss Bodine, do you dare *think* for yourself?"

"I scarcely know how I can help doing so."

"That is just what I was thinking out on the balcony."

"I thought you were charmed by that beautiful Miss Ainsley."

"She has no eyes except for Clancy, and a fine fellow he is too—too good for her, I imagine. I can't make her out."

"Neither can I."

"Oh, bother her! I don't like feminine riddles. Miss Bodine, there's a gentleman in my father's employ bearing your name. Is he a relative?"

"He is my father," she replied proudly.

"I should guess as much if your eyes were not so blue."

"I have my mother's eyes, I am told."

"Well, on that same day—you know—he told me that he was a gentleman: can you guess how?"

"I would rather you should tell me."

"I was sent to him by my father with a message, and I spoke rudely to him at first; not intentionally, but as a harum-scarum young fellow might speak to an elderly man under ordinary circumstances, I meaning nothing more than friendly familiarity. I fear you won't understand, but with you I can't help downright honesty."

"Yes, I understand. He was one of your father's clerks, and you cared little what you said to him."

"Scarcely right, Miss Bodine. With all my faults—and they are legion—I'm good-natured, and do not intentionally hurt people's feelings. What a fine proof of that I gave you in my insufferable stupidity!"

"That's been explained and is past. Please don't refer to it any more."

"Heaven knows I wish to forget it. Well, your father

turned to me from his writing. One look was enough. I begged his pardon twice on the spot. That is the way he told me he was a gentleman. It had been so born and bred into him that, unless a fellow was an idiot, one glance told the story."

Her face softened wonderfully as he spoke, and her eyes grew lustrous with feeling, as she said:

"You are not an idiot, Mr. Houghton. I am glad you so quickly appreciated my father. He is more than a gentleman, he is a hero, and I idolize him."

"I should fancy it was a mutual idolatry," and his eyes expressed an admiration of which the dullest girl would have been conscious, and Ella was not dull at all. "I wish we could become acquainted," he added abruptly, and with such hearty emphasis that her color deepened.

Before she could reply, her chaperon managed to separate them again, and she saw him no more until, rather early in the evening, she was bidding her hostess goodnight. Then she encountered such an eager, questioning, friendly look, that she smiled involuntarily, and slightly bowed as she turned away. Mrs. Robertson was so preoccupied at the moment that she did not witness this brief, subtile exchange of—what? Ella did not know, herself, but her heart was wonderfully light, and there was a delicious sense of exhilaration in all her veins.

As they were driving home, Mrs. Robertson began sententiously, "Ella, in the main you behaved admirably. I don't suppose anything better could be expected of one so unversed in society, especially Charleston society. You were natural and refined in your deportment, and bore yourself as became your ancestry. You will soon learn to make discriminations. I had no idea that young Houghton would be present, or I would have told you about him and his father. Mrs. Willoughby is carrying things too far, even if many of our people have consented to wink at much that we disapprove of. Houghton represents the most detested Northern element among us. Of course you, in your inexperi-

ence, felt that you must be polite to every man introduced to you, and he talked with the volubility of which only a Yankee is capable. It is scarcely possible that you will meet him anywhere except at Mrs. Willoughby's, and if you go there any more you must learn the art of shaking off an objectionable person speedily. Your meeting Houghton to-night was purely accidental, and I reckon that after you have been out a few times you will learn to choose your associates from those only of whom your father and cousin would approve. Perhaps therefore you had better not say anything about your meeting Houghton, unless you feel that you ought. No harm has been done, and it would only displease your father, and render him adverse to your going out hereafter."

The good lady was a little worried by the fear that her reputation as a chaperon would be damaged, and, sincerely believing that "no harm had been done," and that her homily would remove all danger from the future, she counselled as she thought wisely. Her heart was full of goodwill toward the girl, and she was desirous that nothing should prevent her from enjoying society in her interpretation of the word.

Ella thanked her warmly for her kindness and advice, but she was in deep perplexity, for she had never concealed anything from her father before. Her lightness of heart was already gone, and there were tears in her eyes before she slept.

CHAPTER XXI

UNCLE SHEBA SAT UPON

OLD TOBE, keeper of the "rasteran," may have been right in saying that Uncle Sheba had backslidden as far as he could slide, remembering the limitations of a life like his, but circumstances had recently occurred which brought his church relations to a crisis. Tobe was the opposite pole in character to Uncle Sheba. There was an energy about the old caterer which defied age and summer heat. Even his white wool always seemed bristling aggressively and controversially. His fiery spirit influenced his commonest acts. When he boiled potatoes his customers were wont to say "he made 'em bile like de debil."

He carried his energy into his religion, one of his favorite exhortations in the prayer-meeting being, "Ef you sinners wants to 'scape you'se got to git up an' git." During the preaching service he took a high seat in the synagogue, and if any one in the range of his vision appeared drowsy he would turn round and glare till the offender roused into consciousness. The children and young people stood in awe of him, and there was a perfect oasis of good behavior surrounding his pew. Once some irreverent young men thought it would be a joke to pretend to "conviction ob sin," and to seek religious counsel of old Tobe, but they came away scared half out of their wits, one of them declaring that he smelt brimstone a week afterward. The Rev. Mr. Birdsall felt that he had a strong ally in Tobe, but he often sighed over the old man's want of discretion.

Uncle Sheba was Tobe's *bête noir*, and he often inwardly raged over "dat lazy niggah." "De time am comin' w'en

dat backslider got to be sot on," he would mutter, and this seemed his one consolation. He could scarcely possess his soul in patience in the hope of this day of retribution; "but I kin hole in till it come, fer it's gwine to come shuah," he occasionally said to some congenial spirits.

Tobe had a very respectable following in the church both as to numbers and character, for many looked upon his zeal as heaven-inspired. At last there came a hot Sunday afternoon which brought his hour and opportunity. Mr. Birdsall was not only expounding, but also pounding the pulpit cushion in order to waken some attention in his audience. Old Tobe had been whirling from one side to the other, and glaring hither and thither, till in desperation he got up and began to nudge and pinch the delinquents. From one of the back pews, however, there soon arose a sound which so increased as to drown even Mr. Birdsall's stentorian voice. Tobe tiptoed to the spot, and, in wrath that he deemed righteous, blended with not a little exultation, looked upon Uncle Sheba. His head had fallen on his bosom, and from his nose were proceeding sounds which would put to shame a high-pressure engine. Aun' Sheba was shaking him on one side and Kern Watson on the other. Audible snickering was general, but this soon gave way to alarm as Aun' Sheba exclaimed aloud, "He's dun gwine an' got de popoplexy shuah."

"Carry him out," said old Tobe, in a whisper which might have been heard in the street.

Two or three men sprang forward to aid, but Kern sternly motioned them back, and, lifting Uncle Sheba's portly form as if it were a child, carried the unconscious man to the vestibule. Scores were about to follow, but Tobe, with his wool bristling as never seen before, held up his hand impressively, and in the same loud whisper heard by all, remarked, "It doan took de hull cong'ration to wait on one po' sinner. Sabe yo'selves, brud'ren an' sisters. Sabe yo'selves, fer de time am a comin' w'en you'se all will be toted out dis yere temple ob de Lawd foot fo'most."

With this grewsome recollection forced upon their attention the people sat down again, wide awake at last. Tobe beckoned to three or four elderly men whom he knew he could rely upon, and they gathered around Uncle Sheba. His wife was slapping him on the back and chafing his hands, while Kern was splashing water in his face. The unfortunate man began to sneeze, and manifest rather convulsive signs of recovery. At last he blurted out, "Dar now, dar now, Aun' Sheba, doan go on so. I'se gwine to bring in de kinlins right smart."

"Bress de Lawd!" exclaimed Aun' Sheba, "dat soun' nat'rel. No popoplexy in dat ar kin' ob talk."

Tobe and his allies exchanged significant glances. Uncle Sheba was brought to his senses sufficiently to be supported home by his wife and son-in-law. He soon became aware that he had committed an awful indiscretion, for Watson looked stern, and there was a portentous solemnity in Aun' Sheba's expression. He began to enter on excuses. "I was jis' come ober by de heat," he said. "'Tween de heat an' de po'ful sarmon, I was jis' dat 'pressed dat de sperit went out ob me."

"Mr. Buggone," replied his wife, severely, "it was wat went inter you, an' not wat wen' out ob you, dat made de trouble. You jes' gormidized at dinnah. I'se gwine to cut off you'se 'lowance one-half."

At this dire threat Uncle Sheba groaned aloud, feeling that his sin had overtaken him swiftly indeed. His supper was meagre, and to his plaintive remarks Aun' Sheba made no reply, but maintained an ominous silence until sleep again brought the relief of oblivion.

After Uncle Sheba's departure, Tobe and the other pillars of the church held a whispered conference in the vestibule, and soon agreed up their course. When the services were over, they, with other sympathizers, waited upon the minister. Mr. Birdsall was hot, tired, and incensed himself, and so was in a mood to listen to their representations.

"Hit's time dis yere scan'el was r'moved," said Tobe,

solemnly. "We mus' purge ourselves. Mr. Buggone should be sot on, an' 'spended at de berry leas'; an' ter make de right 'pression on oders dat's gettin' weak in dere speritool jints, I move we sot on Mr. Buggone's case to-morrer ebenin'."

Mr. Birdsall was made to feel that it was his duty to accede, but he already felt sorry for Aun' Sheba and the Watsons, and had misgivings as to the result.

"Well," said he at last, "I'll agree to a prelim'nary conf'rence to-morrow evenin' at Mr. Buggone's house. Brud'ren, we must proceed in de spirit ob lub an' charity, an' do our best to pluck a bran' from de burnin'."

In the morning he went around to prepare Aun' Sheba for the ordeal, but she and Vilet had gone out upon their mercantile pursuits, and Uncle Sheba also had disappeared. To Sissy the direful intelligence was communicated. In spite of all Mr. Birdsall's efforts to console, she was left sobbing and rocking back and forth in her chair. When Kern came home, he heard the news with a rigid face.

"Well," he said, "ef it's right, it's right. Ef I'd done wrong I'd stan' up an' face wot come ob it."

Uncle Sheba knew when his wife would return, and was ready to receive her in the meekest of moods. He had cut an unusual quantity of wood and kindlings, but they failed to propitiate. Sissy soon called her mother to come over to her cabin to hear of Mr. Birdsall's visit, and all that it portended. Aun' Sheba listened in silence, and sat for a long time in deep thought, while Sissy and Vilet sobbed quietly. At last the old woman said firmly, "Sissy, I wants you and Kern ter be on han'. Vilet kin take keer ob de chillun. Dis am gwine ter be a solemn 'casion, an' de Lawd on'y knows wot's gwine ter come out ob it. Anyhow dis fam'ly mus' stan' by one noder. My mind ain't clar jes yit, but'll git clar wen de 'mergency comes; I jes' feel it in my bones it'll git clar den."

There was such an awful solemnity in her aspect when she returned, that Uncle Sheba was actually scared. It

seemed to him that her manner could not be more depressing if she were making preparations for his funeral. His trepidation was increased when he was told briefly and sternly to put on his "Sunday-go-to-meetin's."

"Wot fer, Aun' Sheba?"

"You'se know soon 'nuff. De Elder's gwine to call on you dis ebenin'. Ef you'd had de popoplexy in arnest, we'd make great 'lowance fer you, but wen you eat an' drink till you mos' ready to bust, and den 'sturb de hull meetin' by snortin' like a 'potamus, dar's got to be trouble, an' I'se got to meet it."

Uncle Sheba did as he was directed, with the feeling that the judgment day had come.

Meanwhile old Tobe had prepared his indictment, and marshalled his forces for the occasion. At seven in the evening he led them to the nearest corner, and waited for Mr. Birdsall, who soon appeared. Led by him, they entered Aun' Sheba's living-room in solemn procession. Although the evening was warm, there was a fire on the hearth, for she had said, "Dere's gwine ter be notin' wantin' to de 'casion." All the chairs had been brought in from Watson's cabin, and he and Sissy sat in the background. Uncle Sheba had been placed on the further side of the hearth, and was fairly trembling with apprehension. He tried to assume a pious, penitent air, but failed miserably. Aun' Sheba made an imposing spectacle.

She had arrayed herself in her Sunday gown and had wound a flaming turban about her head. Apparently she was the most collected person present, except Kern Watson who sat back in shadow, his face quiet and stern. As the minister and committee entered she rose with dignity and said, "Elder an' brud'ren, take cheers."

Then she sat down again, folded her hands and gazed intently at the ceiling.

If old Tobe was not cool, as indeed he never was, he was undaunted, and only waited for the minister to prepare the way before he opened on Uncle Sheba. A few moments of

oppressive silence occurred, during which the culprit shook as if he had an ague, but Aun' Sheba did not even wink. Mr. Birdsall, regarding her portentous aspect with increased misgiving, began at last in a mournful voice, "Mis Buggone, dis is a very sorrowful 'casion. We are here not as you'se enemies but as you'se fren's. Our duty is painful, 'stremely so, but de brud'ren feel dat de time is come wen Mr. Buggone mus' be made to see de error ob his ways, dat dere mus' be no mo' precrastination. De honah ob de church is japerdized. Neber-de-less he is a free-agent. De lamp still holes out to burn—"

"An' de wilest sinner can return," interrupted Aun' Sheba, nodding her head repeatedly. "I unerstan'. You means well, Elder."

Old Tobe could hold in no longer, and began excitedly, "De question am weder de wile sinner's gwine ter return, or wants ter return, or's got any return in 'im. Elder, I feels fer Mis Buggone an' her family, but dis yere ting's gwine on long anuff. We'se been forbearin' an' long-sufferin' till dere's a scan'el in de church. I'se tried wid all my might er keep de people awake an' listenin', and I'se gettin' dun beat out. Ef we wink at dis awful 'zample you mought as well go to de grabeyard an' preach. It ud be mo' comfable fer you, kase dey'd hear jus' as well, an' dey wouldn't 'sturbe de 'scorse by snorin' de roof off. Now I ask de sense ob dis meetin'. Wen a member backslide so he do notin' but eat an' sleep, oughtener he be sot on?"

There was audible approval from all of Tobe's followers, and he was encouraged to go on.

"Ef Mr. Buggone mus' sleep mos' ob de time let him sleep peac'ble in his own house, but de Scripter say, 'Wake dem dat sleepest,' an' we say it's time Mr. Buggone woke up. Any cullud pusson dat kin snore so po'ful as Mr. Buggone needn't say he weakly an' po'ly. Hafe de poah he put in his snore ud lif' 'im right along in all good works, week days an' Sundays. But I'se los' faith in 'im. He's been 'spostulated an' 'monstrated with, an' 'zorted so often

dat he's hardened an' his conscience zeered wid a hot iron. We'se jes' got to take sich sinners in han', or de paster-lot won't hole de flock no mo'. I move we take steps to s'pend Mr. Buggone."

"Secon' dat motion," said one of his followers promptly.

"Mr. an' Mis Buggone, have you nothin' to say?" asked Mr. Birdsall sadly.

"Elder," began Uncle Sheba in his most plaintive tone, "you know de heat yistidy was po'ful—"

"Mr. Buggone," interrupted his wife severely, "dis ain't no 'casion fer beatin' round de bush an' creepin troo knot-holes. You knows de truf an' I knows de truf. No, Elder, we'se got not'in ter say at jes' dis time."

"Den, Elder, you put de motion dat we take steps," said Tobe, promptly.

With evident reluctance Mr. Birdsall did so, and the affirmative was unanimously voted by the committee.

"I wants ter be s'pended too," said Aun' Sheba, still gazing at the ceiling.

"Now, Mis Buggone, dere would be no right nor reason in dat," the minister protested.

"Elder, I doesn't say you-uns ain't all right, an' I does say you means well, but I'se de bes' jedge of my inard speritool frame. Hit was neber jes' clar in my mind dat I was 'ligious, an' now I know I ain't 'ligious, an' I wants ter be s'pended."

"But it *is* clar in my mind dat you are religious, dat you'se a good woman. Would to de good Lawd dat de church was full ob Christians like you!"

"I'se spoke my min'," persisted Aun' Sheba, doggedly. "Ole Tobe shall hab his way an' de church be purged."

"Elder," said Tobe, now quite carried away by zeal and exultation, "p'raps Mis Buggone am de bes' jedge. Ef she feel she ain't one ob de aninted ones—"

"Peace!" commanded Mr. Birdsall, "never with my consent shall any steps be taken to suspend Mis Buggone. You

forgits, Tobe, how easy it is to pull up de wheat wid de tares."

"Den I s'pend myself," said Aun' Sheba, "an' I *is* s'pended. Now I gwine ter 'fess de truf. I guve Mr. Buggone an extra Sunday dinner yistidy. I was puff up wid pride kase business was good, an' I bress de Lawd fer prosperin' me. Den like a fool I 'dulge myself and I 'dulge Mr. Buggone. Ef he's ter be s'pended fer a snorin' sleep, I oughter be s'pended fer a dozin' sleep, fer I *was* a-dozin'; an' I feels it in my bones dat we bofe oughter be s'pended, an' I *is*, no matter wot you does wid Mr. Buggone. Now, Tobe, you hab had you'se say, an' I'se a-gwine to hab mine. You'se got a heap ob zeal. You wouldn't lead de flock; you'd dribe 'em, you'd chase 'em, you'd worry de bery wool off ob dem. Whar you git you sperit fum? You ain't willin' ter wait till de jedgment day; you'd hab a jedgment ebery day in de week. You'se like dem 'siples dat was allers wantin' ter call down fiah from Heben. Look out you don't get scorched yo'self. I can't be 'ligious long o' you, an' if you got 'ligion I habn't. Elder, you says de Lawd libed yere on dis yarth. I ony wish I'd libed in dem days. I'd a cooked, an' washed, an' ironed, an' baked fer Him an' all de 'siples. Den like anuff He'd say: 'Ole Aun' Sheba, you means well. I won't be hard on you nor none of you'se folks when de jedgment day comes.' But so much happen since dat ar time wen He was yere dat I kinder got mixed up. I reckon I jes' be s'pended, an' let Him put de ole woman whar she belong wen de time comes."

There was pathos in her tones; her stoicism had passed away, and tears were streaming from her eyes, while Sissy was sobbing audibly. The committee at first had been aghast at the result of the meeting, and now their emotional natures were being excited also. Old Tobe was disconcerted, and still more so when Aun' Sheba suddenly rallied, and, turning upon him, said with ominous nods, "Wen dat day come, Old Tobe, you won't be de jedge."

Thus far Kern Watson had sat silent as a statue, but

now his strong feelings and religious instincts gained the mastery. Lifting up his powerful mellow voice he sang:

"The people was a-gatherin' from far and neah;
Some come fer fishes an' some ter heah;
But He fed dem all, an' He look so kin'
Dat dey followed, dey followed, an' none stay behin'.

"But one got loss, an' he wandered far,
De night come dark, no moon, no star;
De lions roared an' de storm rose high,
An' de po' loss one lie down ter die.

"Den come a voice, an' de win's went down,
An' de lions grovel on de groun',
An' de po' loss one am foun' an' sabed,
For de Shepherd ebery danger brabed."

These words, as sung by Kern, routed old Tobe completely; he hung his head and had not a word to say. The committee had beaten time with their feet, and began to clap their hands softly. Then Mr. Birdsall, with kindly energy, exhorted Uncle Sheba, who groaned aloud and said "Amen" as if in the depths of penitence. A long prayer followed which even moved old Tobe, for Aun' Sheba had shaken his self-confidence terribly. The little company broke up with hand-shaking all around, Tobe saying: "Sister Buggone, I bears no ill-will. I'se gwine ter look inter my speritool frame, an' ef I cotch de debil playin' hob wid me he's gwine to be put out, hoof an' horns."

Aun' Sheba wrung her son-in-law's hand, as she said: "You'se singin', Kern, kinder went to de right spot. Neber-de-less I'se s'pended till I feels mo' shuah."

Sissy kissed her mother and father affectionately, and then the old couple were left alone. Aun' Sheba gazed thoughtfuliy into the dying fire, but before long Uncle Sheba began to hitch uneasily in his chair. Finally he mustered up courage to say: "Aun' Sheba, dis am been bery po'ful 'casion, bery tryin' to my narbes an' feelin's. Yet I feels kinder good an' hopeful in my inards. Ef I wasn't jes' so dun beat out I'd feel mo' good. P'raps now,

'siderin' all I'se pass troo, you wouldn't min' gibin' me a bit ob dat cole ham an' hoe-cake—"

"Mr. Buggone," began Aun' Sheba sternly, then she suddenly paused, threw her apron over her head and rocked back and forth.

"Dar now, Aun' Sheba, dar now, doan go on so. I was ony a sigestin' kase I feels po'ly, but I kin stan' it."

"I'se no better dan old Tobe hisself," groaned Aun' Sheba. "All on us is hard on some one, while a hopin' fer marcy ourselves. Ef you'se hebin is in de cubud, go in dar an' hep a sef." And she rose and opened the door of the treasure-house.

"I'se jes' take a leetle bite, Aun' Sheba, jes a leetle comf'tin bite, kase I'se been so sot on dat I feels bery weakly an' gone-like."

Uncle Sheba was soon comforted and sleeping, but Aun' Sheba still sat by the hearth until the last glowing embers turned to ashes. "Yes," she muttered at last, "I'se s'pended till I feels mo' shuah."

CHAPTER XXII

YOUNG HOUGHTON IS DISCUSSED

SLEEP and buoyancy of temperament enabled Ella to see everything in a very different light the following morning. "The idea of my taking what happened last night so seriously!" she said aloud while making her toilet. "As Mrs. Robertson said, 'no harm has been done.' Of course I shall tell papa and Cousin Sophy that I met and talked to Mr. Houghton. What if I did? He was introduced to me just as the others were, and what do I care for him? He was a very agreeable Vandal, and I'm glad to have had a chance to see what Vandals are like. As with other bugaboos they lose their terrors under close inspection."

At breakfast, therefore, she was merrier than usual, and gave a graphic and humorous account of the company, expatiating on the beauty and mystery of Miss Ainsley, her preference for Clancy, and his apparent devotion to her.

"By the way," she said at last, "who do you think was there? You can't guess, so I will tell you—young Mr. Houghton."

"What! the son of that old—beg pardon, Cousin Hugh," and Mrs. Bodine laughingly added, "It nearly slipped out that time."

"I hope he was not presented to you, Ella," said her father gravely.

"Well, he was, and by Mrs. Willoughby. I didn't talk with him very much, but of course I had to be polite. When I first heard his name I felt that I should be polite

for your sake; and I was rather sorry for him, too, because so many evidently frowned on his presence."

"You need not be polite to him again for my sake," said her father decidedly. "I am under no obligations to him or his father, and this is a case into which policy cannot enter. I do not blame you, however," he added, more kindly, "for you acted from good impulses. Of course, as you say, you must be polite to every one, but you have a perfect right to be cold toward those who are unfriendly to us, and with whom we can never have any part or lot. I have been in Mr. Houghton's employ long enough to be convinced more fully, if possible, that, while he is an honest man, he has not a particle of sympathy with or for our people. I told him from the start that there could be no social relations between us. You must learn to avoid and shake off people who are objectionable."

"Well," said Ella, laughing, "I won't have to shake off people while under Mrs. Robertson's wing. She bore down upon us, as Cousin Sophy would say, like a seventy-four of the line. Dear papa, you know that Mr. Houghton is nothing to me, but it scarcely seems fair that he should be punished for the sins of his father."

"You need not punish him, my dear. Simply have nothing to do with him. He is the last person in the world to be regarded as an object of sympathy," and her father spoke a little irritably.

Ella thought it wise to make no further reference to him. "After all," she thought, "what does it matter? I'm glad he had a chance to explain that disagreeable episode in the street, and now I am practically done with him. I can at least be civil, should we ever meet again, and there it will end."

"Mrs. Willoughby is going too far," said Mrs. Bodine, musingly. "If she continues to invite such people she may find that other invitations will be declined without regrets. We haven't much left to us, but we can at least choose our associates."

"Don't be alarmed," said Ella lightly. "I did not invite him to spend this evening with us," and kissing her father and cousin good-by, she started for Mara's home.

Her thoughts were busy on the way, and they were chiefly of a self-gratulatory character. The whole episode now amused her greatly, for she could not help agreeing with her father that the great, strapping fellow was not an object of sympathy. "He probably has a score of flames at the North," she thought, "and wouldn't mind adding a little Southern girl to the number, especially as she is a sort of forbidden fruit to him. Well, he's not a bad fellow, if he is that old blank's son, as Cousin Sophy always suggests. Nevertheless, I don't think he's treated fairly, and I can't keep up these old bitter feelings. What had he or I to do with the war, I'd like to know? Well, well, I suppose it's natural for those who went through it to feel as they do, but I wish Mara wasn't so bound up in the past. It isn't fair to him," she broke out again. "He said I wouldn't be ostracized at the North. Bother! it don't matter what he said. As to our getting acquainted—" And she almost laughed outright at the preposterous idea.

She and Mara were soon busy as usual, and as opportunity offered, she told her fellow-worker of the events of the evening. Mara, with a languid interest, inquired about those whom she knew, and how they appeared, and she sometimes laughed aloud at Ella's droll descriptions. She was even more emphatic in her disapproval of young Houghton's presence than the captain or Mrs. Bodine had been. "I shall never accept any invitation from Mrs. Willoughby after this," she said firmly.

"Well now, Mara," replied Ella, with a little toss of her head, "I can't share in that spirit. Mr. Houghton is a gentleman, and I could meet him in society, chat with him, and let it end there. We can't keep this thing up forever, that is, we of the younger generations. Why should I hate that big, good-natured fellow? The very idea seems ridiculous. I could laugh at him, and tease and satirize him

a little, but I could no more feel as you do toward him, than I could cherish an enmity toward a sunflower. Still, since father feels as he does, I shall have to cut him as far as possible, should I ever meet him again, which is not probable. I reckon that Mrs. Willoughby will be so crushed that even she won't invite him any more."

"I should hope not, truly."

"Well, she has a Northern girl visiting her, and a very remarkable looking girl she is."

"That is a different affair, although I do not approve of it. Miss Ainsley is the daughter of a rich man who is doing much for the South, and who feels kindly toward us, while old Mr. Houghton detests us as heartily as we do him. He is absorbing our business and taking it away from Southern men, and he exults over the fact. Miss Ainsley is certainly a very beautiful girl, for I've seen her. I suppose she received much attention." Mara purposely turned her back on Ella, and busied herself in the further part of the kitchen. She had heard rumors of Clancy's attention to the fair Northerner, and she both dreaded and hoped to have them verified. "Anything," she sighed, "oh, anything which will break his hold upon my heart!"

Unconsciously, Ella gave her more information than she could well endure. "I reckon she did receive attention, very concentrated attention, and that was all she cared for evidently. She was rather languid until Mr. Clancy appeared, and then she welcomed him with all her brilliant eyes. He looked as if he understood her perfectly, and they spent most of the evening on the shadowy balcony together. It is another case of the North conquering the South; but if I were a man, I'd think twice before surrendering to that girl. I had an instinctive distrust of her."

Mara felt that she was growing pale, and she immediately busied herself about the stove until her face flamed with the heat.

"You don't seem to take much interest in the affair," Ella remarked, as Mara continued silent.

"I never expect to make Miss Ainsley's acquaintance," was the quiet reply, "and Mr. Clancy in my view has almost ceased to be a Southerner."

"Well, I never met him before, and have only heard a little about him from cousin Sophy, and that not in his favor. He has a strong, intelligent face though, and a very resolute look in his eyes."

"Yes," admitted Mara coldly, "I reckon he's one who would have his own way without much regard for others."

"He may slip up for once. Miss Ainsley struck me as a girl who would have her way, no matter how many hearts she fractured."

Aun' Sheba and Vilet now entered, diverting Ella's thoughts. The old woman sat down rather wearily, a look of deep dejection on her face.

"Look here, Aun' Sheba," said the lively girl, "you're not well, or else something is troubling you. You looked down-hearted yesterday, and you look funereal now."

"We'se been sot on," said Aun' Sheba solemnly.

"'Sot on!' good gracious! Aun' Sheba, what do you mean?"

"Well, dey sot on my ole man, an' husband an' wife am one. Hit didn't turn out bad as I s'posed it would, bress dat ar son-in-law ob mine, but I keeps a tinkin' it all ober, an' I'se 'jected, I is; an' dar's no use ob shoutin' glory wen you doan feel glory." Then she told the whole story, which kept Ella on pins and needles, for, while she felt an honest sympathy for the poor soul, she had an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh.

"Yes, Missy Mara," concluded Aun' Sheba pathetically, "I'se s'pended, I s'pended myself, an' I'se gwine to stay s'pended till I feels mo' shuah."

"Suspended, Aun' Sheba!" said Mara, starting, suddenly becoming conscious of present surroundings.

Aun' Sheba looked at her wonderingly, but voluble Ella made it all right by saying, "No wonder Mara ex-

claimed. The idea! I wish I was half as good as you are."

"Oh, yes," cried Mara, striving to conceal her deep preoccupation, "that's the way with Aun' Sheba; the better she is, the worse she thinks she is. Do you mean to say that your church people have suspended you?"

"No. I'se s'pended myself. Didn't I tole you?"

"There, there, Aunty, I didn't understand. I believe in you and always will."

"Well, honey, I reckon you'se ole nuss'll alers be de same ter you wheder she'se 'ligious or no."

Both the girls now stood beside her, with a hand on either shoulder, and Ella said heartily, "Now, Aun' Sheba, it is just as you said, you're 'jected; you've got the blues, and everything looks blue and out of shape to you. You can't see the truth any more than if you were cross-eyed. I can prove to you whether you're 'ligious or not. Vilet, ain't your grandma a good Christian woman?"

" 'Deed an' she is troo an' troo," said the child, who had been a silent, yet deeply sympathetic listener. "Many's de time she's sent me wid good tings to po' sick folks."

"There now," cried Ella. "Aun' Sheba, you've got to believe the Bible. 'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,' it says. You can't deceive a child. Vilet knows better than you do."

"Shuah now, does you tink it's dataway?" and Aun' Sheba looked up with hope in her eyes.

"Of course we think it's that way," said Ella. "Aun' Sheba, you know a heap, as you say, about many things, but you don't half know how good you are."

"I know how bad I is anyhow. I tells you I was in a dozin' sleep."

"Well, I've been in a dozin' sleep many a time," said Ella, "and I'm not going to be suspended by any one, not even myself."

"Aun' Sheba," said Mara gently but firmly, "you know

I'm in earnest, and how much I love you for all your goodness ever since I was a helpless baby. You wouldn't say hard, untrue things against any one else. You have no more right to be unjust to yourself. As Ella says, I wish I was as good a Christian as you are."

"Now, Missy Mara, no mo' ob dat ar talk. I knows my inard feelin's bes' ob any one. What Vilet say chirk me up po'fully, kase she see me ebery day. I tell you what I'se gwine ter do; I'se gwine ter put myself on 'bation, and den see wot come ob it. Now, honeys, I'se 'feered long nuff wid business. You'se dun me good, honey lam's, an' de Lawd bress you bofe. I'se tote de basket a heap pearter fer dis yere talk. I feels a monst'us sight betteh. Wish I could see you, honey, lookin' as plump as Missy Ella. Dat do me mos' as much good as feelin' 'ligious."

Mara worried Mrs. Hunter over her pretence of making a dinner, and then gladly sought the solitude of her own room. At last she said with a bitter smile, "He has broken the last shred that bound me." But as the hours passed in tumultuous thoughts, her heart told her how vain were such words.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE WARNING

CAPTAIN BODINE was halting serenely down into that new vista in his life of which we have already spoken. Every day both promise and fulfilment seemed richer than he had ever imagined any future experience could be. He was domiciled in a home exactly to his taste; his cousin's brave, cheerful spirit was infectious; the worry of financial straits was over, and Ella was blooming and happy. These favorable changes in themselves would have done much toward banishing gloom and despondency; but another element had entered into his existence which was as unexpected as it was sweet. A deep, subtile exhilaration was growing out of his companionship with Mara. Every long, quiet talk that he enjoyed with her left a longing for another. She was learning to regard him almost as a father, but he did not think of her as he did of Ella. He loved Ella as his child, but her buoyant spirit, her intense enjoyment of the present, and her eager, hopeful eyes, fixed upon the future, separated her from him. He did not wish it otherwise in her case, for he hoped that there was a happy future for her, and he rejoiced daily over the gladness in her face. Mara, although so young, seemed of his own generation. He often repeated to himself his cousin's words, "She is as old as you are." She appeared to live in the past as truly as himself. There was scarcely a subject on which they were not in sympathy.

He believed that Mrs. Bodine was right, and that Mara was essentially different from others of her age. Indeed the impression grew upon him that the mysterious principle of heredity had prepared her for the companionship which apparently was valued as much by her as by himself. During the many hours in which he was alone, he thought the subject over in all its aspects, as he supposed, and a hope, exquisitely alluring, began to take form in his heart.

No man is without a certain amount of egotism and self-love, and, although these were not characteristics of Bodine, he could not help dwelling upon the truth that the remainder of his life would be very different from what he had expected could Mara be near to him.

Her eloquent look of sympathy so soon after they met began to take the form of prophecy. At first it led him to believe that she would receive a paternal, loving regard, much the same as he gave to Ella; but, as time passed, he began to dwell upon the possibility of a closer tie. She appeared to have no especial friends among young men, nor indeed to care for any. Might not a strong, quiet affection grow in each heart until they could become one in the closest sense, even as they were now one in so many of their thoughts and views?

It was natural that his deepening regard should tinge his manner, yet Mara dreamed of nothing beyond the affection which she was glad to receive from him. Vigilant eyes, however, were following Captain Bodine, and Clancy, with a lover's jealous intuition, was guessing his rival's thoughts and intentions more clearly every day. He did not adopt any system of espionage, nor did he ask questions of any one, but merely took occasion to walk on the Battery at an hour when it was most frequented. Here he often saw Mara and the veteran enjoying the cool sunset hour, and sometimes he observed that Mara saw him. So far from shunning such observation, he not infrequently compelled her recognition, which was always coldly bestowed upon her part.

"It would seem that Mr. Clancy is more inclined to be friendly than you are," Bodine remarked one evening.

"Before Mr. Clancy valued Northern friends more than Southern ones we were friendly," was Mara's quiet reply. She had schooled herself now into outward self-control, but she chafed at his presence, and thought he happened to be near her too frequently. Still it was ever will *versus* heart, for the latter always acknowledged him as master.

He was satisfied that his impressions in regard to Bodine were correct, and was impelled by his love to make an effort to save her from drifting into relations which he believed must inevitably destroy her chance for happiness. His strong, keen mind had analyzed her every word, tone, and varying expression, and he had become quite sure that her bearing toward him was not the result of indifference, but was rather due to pride, and a resolute purpose not to yield to him unless he adopted her views. He also understood her sufficiently well to dread lest a morbid sense of loyalty to her father's memory might lead her to accept his friend and old companion in arms.

"Her immediate associates would encourage the idea," he thought, "and there are none to advise or warn her except myself. She is morbid and unbalanced enough to commit just such a fatal error. Her bringing up, and all the influence of that warped Mrs. Hunter, would lead her to sacrifice herself to the manes of her ancestors. Yet how can I warn her—how can I reach her except I write? I wish to look into her eyes when I speak. I wish to plead with her with all the power that I possibly possess. Great Heaven! if this that I fear should happen, what an awakening she might have when it was too late!"

At last he resolved on the simplest and most straightforward course, and wrote—

"MARA—Will you grant me one more interview—the last, unless you freely concede others. I have something important to say to you, something that relates far more to your happiness than to my own. In excuse for my request, I have nothing better to plead than my love which you have rejected, and

yet which entitles me to some consideration. I think my motive is unselfish —as unselfish as can be possible under the circumstances. You may treat me as you please, but your welfare will always be dear to me. I shall not seek to change your convictions, nor shall I plead for myself, for I know that all this would be useless; but I wish to see you face to face once more alone in your own home. I must also request that Mrs. Hunter will not interfere with our interview. You are not a child, and you know that I am a gentleman, and that I am incapable of saying a word at variance with my profound respect for you. OWEN CLANCY."

Mara was deeply agitated by this missive. Her first emotion was that of anger, as much at herself as at him—a confused resentment that his words, his very handwriting, should so move her, and that he should venture to write at all. Had she not made it sufficiently plain that he had no right to take, or, at least, to manifest any such interest in her affairs? Were all her efforts futile to hide her love? In spite of her habit of reserve and repression she had a passionate heart, and this fact had been forced upon her by vain and continuous struggles. Had he the penetration to learn the truth? She could not tell, and this uncertainty touched her pride to the very quick. After hours of wavering purpose, impulses to ignore him and his request, moments of tenderness in which will, pride, and every consideration were almost overwhelmed, she at last arrived at a fixed resolution. "I *will* see him," she murmured. "He has virtually told me that he will not give up what he terms his principles for love. I shall not acknowledge my secret, but if he has discovered it, he shall learn that I also will not give up my principles for love."

The next morning she quietly handed Clancy's note to Mrs. Hunter.

"Shameful!" ejaculated the lady. "Of course you will pay no attention to him, or else write a curt refusal. I insist on one course or the other."

Mara looked steadfastly at her aunt until the worthy lady was somewhat disconcerted, and asked fretfully, "What do you mean by that look, Mara?"

"Aunty, can't you realize that I am no longer a child, as he says?"

"Well, but in a case like this—"

"In a case like this which concerns me so personally, I must act according to my own judgment. You can be in the adjoining room. Indeed I have no objection to your hearing what is said, but I would rather you should not. You have no occasion to fear. Mr. Clancy has alienated me forever. I have no doubt that before the summer is over he will be engaged to Miss Ainsley, if he is not already engaged virtually. I have reasons for granting this final interview which are personal—which my self-respect requires, and, since they are personal, I need not mention them. There shall be no want of respect and affection for you, aunty, but you must realize that I have become an independent woman, and I have the entire right to decide certain questions for myself."

"Well, I wash my hands of it all," said Mrs. Hunter, coldly, "and since my strong convictions have no weight with you, and you intend to act independently of me, of course I shall not permit myself to hear a word of your conversation."

"That will be the more delicate and honorable course, aunty."

"Well, Mara, I only wish I need not be in the house at the time."

"Aunty, that is the same as saying that your enmity toward Mr. Clancy is greater than your love for me."

"But I don't see the use of this intensely disagreeable interview. This is the only home I have."

"And the only home I have also, aunty."

"Oh, well, if you will, you will, I reckon."

"Yes, if I will, I *will*, and Mr. Clancy shall learn that I have a will."

As Aun' Sheba was departing that morning, Mara followed her into the hallway, and, placing a note in her hand, said, "Give that to Mr. Clancy and to no other. Say noth-

ing to him or to any one else. Do you understand, Aun' Sheba?"

"I does, honey. Wen you talk dataway you'se heah an eyster shoutin' 'fore Aun' Sheba speak."

Clancy only said, "Thank you," as he thrust a half-dollar into the old woman's hand.

Aun' Sheba laid it on the desk, and remarked with great dignity, "I does some tings widout money."

He paid no heed to her, but read eagerly, "Mr. Clancy —Come this evening. Mara Wallingford."

With a long breath he thought, "It will be my last chance. I fear it will be useless, but at no future day shall she think in bitterness of heart, 'He might have done more to save me.'"

There was no sudden, involuntary illumination of her face on this occasion when he entered her little parlor, and she could not help noticing that his face was pale. She also saw from his expression that his spirit was as high as hers; that there was not a trace of the lover, eager to plead his cause. "He has pleaded successfully elsewhere," she thought, and, in spite of all other conflicting feelings, she was curious to know what his motive could be in seeking the interview.

"Good-evening, Mr. Clancy. Will you sit down?" she said, coldly.

"Yes, Mara. Pardon me for calling you Mara. I am beyond any affectation of formality with you, and you know there is no lack of respect on my part."

She merely bowed and waited in silence.

"When you learn my motive for making my request, for coming here to-night, you will probably resent it, but you have taught me to expect little else except resentment from you."

"Mr. Clancy, there is no cause for such language. Certainly I was quietly pursuing the even tenor of my way."

"Do you understand fully whither that way is leading?"

"Truly, Mr. Clancy, that is a singular question for you to ask."

"I understand you, Mara. You mean that it is no affair of mine."

He knew that her silence gave assent to this view, and he answered as if she had spoken.

"Nevertheless you are mistaken. It *is* an affair of mine. There could be no peace for me in the future if I failed you now, for it seems to me I am the only true friend you have in the world."

"Mr. Clancy," she said hotly, "we have differed so greatly before that I might have been saved the pain of this interview, but we never differed as we do at this moment. I cannot listen to you any longer. It would be disloyalty to those who *are* true friends—friends that I love and honor."

"Do you love Captain Bodine?"

"Certainly I do. He was my father's friend; he is my honored friend."

"Do you *love* Captain Bodine?"

"What do you mean?" she asked angrily, flushing to her very brow.

"Mara, be calm. Listen to me as you value your life, as you value your own soul. Do you think I would come here for slight cause at such cost to us both?"

"I think you are strangely mistaken in coming here, and using language which makes me doubt your sanity."

"Please do me the justice to note that there is nothing wild in my manner, nor any excitement in my words."

"Noting this, I find it more difficult to explain your course, or to pardon it."

"It is not necessary at present, that you should do either. Please be patient a few minutes longer and my mission is ended. I am not pleading for myself, but for you. Please listen, or a time may come when in a bitterness beyond words you may regret that you did not hear me. Thank Heaven! it is clear that I have not come too late. Captain

Bodine is more than your friend in *his* feelings; he is your lover, and you are so morbid, unfriended, unguided, that you are capable of sacrificing yourself—"

"Hush! you are wronging a man whom you are unworthy to name. He has never dreamed of such love as you suggest."

"I am right. Oh, I have learned too deeply in the school of experience not to know. My warning may be of no avail, but you shall not drift unawares into this thing, you shall not enter into it, nor be persuaded into it from a false spirit of self-sacrifice—"

"Mr. Clancy, I will not listen a moment longer to such preposterous language. You are passing far beyond the limits of my forbearance. If your conscience is burdened on my account because I am so 'unfriended,' I absolve you fully. You will and do know how to console yourself. Our interview must end here and now. It were disloyalty for me to listen a moment longer. We are strangers from this day forth, Mr. Clancy." And she rose flushed and trembling.

He also rose, and with an intent look which held her gaze, said gently: "There is that which will speak although I am banished."

"What?"

"Your heart."

"If it broke a thousand times I will not speak to you again," she cried passionately. "Even if you were right it would be ignoble to suggest such a thing. Truly your associations have led you far from the promise of your youth."

"I have not said that your heart would plead for me," he replied sternly. "But it *will* plead against all that is unnatural, contrary to your young girlhood, contrary to the true, right instincts which God has created. You may seek to stifle its voice, but you cannot. When you are alone it will tell you, like the still small voice of God, that your obdurate will is wrong, that your narrow prejudices and

morbid memories are all wrong and vain;—it will tell you that you cannot become the wife of this man, who would sacrifice you as a solace to his remaining years, without wrecking your happiness for life. Farewell, Mara Wallingford. There is one thing you can never forget—that I warned you."

He bowed low and departed immediately.

CHAPTER XXIV

"THE IDEA!"

MARA was not the kind of girl that faints or goes into hysterics. The spirit of her father was aroused to the last degree. She felt that she had been arraigned and condemned by one who had no right to do either; that all the cherished traditions of her life had been trampled upon; that her father's loved companion-in-arms, and her dear friend, had been insulted. Even wise, saintly Mrs. Bodine, her genial counsellor, had been ignored. "Was there ever such monstrous assumption!" she cried, as she paced back and forth with clinched hands.

She soon heard the step of Mrs. Hunter, and became outwardly calm.

"Well?" said her aunt.

"He won't come again, nor shall I speak to him again. Let these facts content you, aunty."

"That much at least is satisfactory," said Mrs. Hunter, "but I think it was a wretched mistake to see him at all."

"It was not a mistake, for he has revealed the depths into which a man can sink who adopts his course. I have some respect for an out-and-out Northerner, brought up as such; but it does seem that when a man turns traitor, as it were, he goes to greater lengths than those whose camp he joins. He suspects those who are too noble for him to understand."

"Whom does Mr. Clancy suspect?"

"Oh, all of us. He came to advise me as an unprotected, unfriended, unguided girl."

"Was there ever such impudence on the face of the earth!"

Mara sank exhausted into a chair in the inevitable reaction from her strong excitement.

"Aunty, it is all over, and we shall not meet again except as strangers. Never say a word of his coming, of this interview, to any one. It is my affair, and I wish to forget it as far as possible."

"You know I'm not a gossip, Mara, about family matters, especially disagreeable matters. Well, perhaps it will turn out for the best, since you have broken with him entirely. It always made me angry that he should continue to speak to you, and even sit down and talk to you at an evening company, when you could not repulse him without arresting the attention of every one."

"Good-night, aunty. All that is over."

"Mara, you must take an opiate to-night."

"Yes; give me something to make me sleep, that will bring oblivion for at least to-night. I must be ready for my work in the morning. It won't take me long *now* to attain self-control."

"Mara," cried Ella the next day, "you look positively ill. I wish you could take a rest. Suppose we shut up shop for a while, and hang out a sign, 'closed for repairs.'"

"No, Ella. I can stand it, if you can, till August, and then we will take a month's rest. I wasn't very well last night, but I have found a remedy which is going to help me, and I shall be better."

Ella took the surface meaning of these words, and, being preoccupied with her own thoughts, remained, as well as Mara, rather silent that morning. Although she assured herself more than once that George Houghton was "nothing to her," she found herself thinking a great deal about him, and what she termed "their droll experiences." Prone to take a mirthful view of everything, she often laughed over the whole affair, and it grew rather than lost in interest with time. It was the first real adventure of her girlhood, and he was the first man who had retained more than a transient place in her thoughts. Feeling that their acquaintance

had come about through no fault of hers, she was disposed to get all the fun possible out of what had occurred.

The morning was warm, and she was working in charming *dishabille*. Dressed in light summer costume, thrown open at her throat, and with sleeves rolled to her shoulders, she appeared a veritable Hebe. Her bright, golden, fluffy hair was gathered carelessly into a Grecian knot, and her flushed face received more than one flour-mark as she impatiently brushed away the flies. Seeing her smiling to herself so often, Mara envied her, but made no comment. At last the girl broke into a ringing laugh.

"What is amusing you so greatly?" Mara asked.

"I can't get over that party at Mrs. Willoughby's. It was all so irresistibly comical. Cousin Sophy thinks she has a genius for choosing chaperons, and so she has, but fate is too strong for men and gods, not to mention saintly and secluded old ladies. I had scarcely more than entered the drawing-room, and taken my bearings, as cousin would say, when the worst Vandal of the lot is marched up to me, and I—green little girl—thought I must be polite to him and every one else. When I think of it all, I see that my chaperon was like a distressed hen with a duckling that would go into the water. Without any effort of mine, that great Goth, Mr. Houghton, submitted himself to my inspection, and instead of being horrified, I have been laughing at him ever since. He struck me as an exceedingly harmless creature, with large capabilities for blundering. He would not step on a fly maliciously, yet poor Mrs. Robertson acted as if I were near an ogre who might devour me at a mouthful. How she did manœuvre to keep that big fellow away! and what a homily she gave me on our way home! It all seems so absurd. I wish papa would not take such things so seriously, for I can't see any harm in making sport of the Philistines."

"Making sport *for* the Philistines—that is what your father and what we all object to. This young Houghton would very gladly amuse himself at your expense."

"I'd like to see him try it," said Ella defiantly. "I'd turn the tables on him so quickly as to take away his breath."

"Oh, Ella! why do you think about such people at all?"

"Because they amuse me. What's the harm in thinking about him in my jolly way? There's nothing bad about him. His worst crimes are, that he is comical and the son of his father."

"How do you know there's nothing bad about him?"

"For the same reason that I distrust Miss Ainsley. Each makes an impression which I believe is correct."

"Well, well, Ella," said Mara, a little impatiently, "laugh it out and have done with him. For all our sakes, please have nothing more to do with such people."

"I haven't sought 'such people,'" replied Ella, with a shrug; "but I tell you, Mara, I'm not going through life with my eyes shut, nor am I going to look through a pair of blue spectacles. See here, sweetheart, what did God give me eyes for? What did he give me a brain for? To see through some one else's eyes? to think with the brain of another? No, indeed; that's contrary to such reason and common-sense as I possess."

"You certainly will be guided by your father?"

"Yes, yes, indeed, in all that pertains to his welfare and happiness. I could die for him this minute, and would if it were required. But there are things which I cannot do for him or any one. I cannot ignore my own conscience and sense of right. I cannot think his thoughts any more than he can think mine. You dear, melancholy little goose, don't you know that God never rolls two people into one, even after they are married? They are, or should be, one in a vital sense, yet they are different, independent beings, and were made so. I'd like to know of any one in this town more bent upon having her own way than you."

Mara was silent, for Ella had a way of putting things which disturbed her.

"Cousin Sophy," said Ella in the afternoon, "hasn't the

proper time come for me to make my party call on Mrs. Willoughby? You are my Mentor in all that relates to etiquette, and that giddy fraction of the world termed society."

"Well, yes," said the old lady, "I suppose it is time. In the case of Mrs. Willoughby it will be little more than a formality, for she is an acquaintance you will not care to cultivate. You may be lucky enough to find her out, and then your card will answer all the purposes of a call."

"Oh, I know that much, cousin, if I am from the wilds of the interior; but if she is in, I suppose I should sit down and talk about the weather a little while."

"Go along, you saucy puss. Tell her how shocked you were to see old Houghton's son in her parlors."

"Well, I was at first. Bah! cousin, he's a great big boy, and doesn't know any more than I do about *some* things."

"Well added. Tell her, then, we have enough Southern gentlemen remaining, and there is no necessity of inviting big Northern hobble-de-hoys."

"Oh! I didn't mean that, cousin. Be fair now. He was gentlemanly enough, as much so as the rest of them, but he was young and giddy, like myself, just as you used to be and are now sometimes;" and she stopped the old lady's mouth with kisses, then ran to dress for the street.

The kitchen Hebe of the morning was soon metamorphosed into a very charmingly costumed young woman. Even Miss Ainsley was compelled to recognize the lovely and harmonious effect, although it did not bear the latest brand of fashion, or represent costly expenditure.

Both she and Mrs. Willoughby were pleased as Ella stepped lightly into the back parlor, and the young girl congratulated herself that she had come so opportunely, for they were evidently expecting visits like her own.

One and another dropped in until Mrs. Willoughby was entertaining three or four in the front parlor. Miss Ainsley remained chatting with Ella, who felt that the Northern girl's remarks were largely tentative, evincing a wish to draw her

out. Shrewd Ella soon began to generalize to such a degree that Miss Ainsley thought, "You are no fool," and had a growing respect for the "little baker," as she had termed the young girl.

Then Clancy appeared, and Ella was forgotten, but she saw the same unmistakable welcome which from some women would mean all that a lover could desire. Ella thought that a slight expression of vexation crossed his brow as he recognized in her Mara's partner and friend, but he spoke to her politely and even cordially. Indeed, no one could do otherwise, for her face would propitiate an ogre. She thought there was a spice of recklessness in Clancy's manner, and she heard him remark to Miss Ainsley that he had come to say good-by for a short time. That young woman led the way to the balcony and began to expostulate; and then Ella's attention was riveted on a tall young fellow, who was shaking hands with Mrs. Willoughby.

"Good gracious!" she thought, "what can I do if he sees me? How can I 'shake off and avoid' in this back parlor? I can't make a bolt for the front door or sneak out of the back door; I can't sit here like a graven image if he comes—"

"Miss Bodine! Well, I'm lucky for once in my ill-fated life."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," remarked Ella, turning from the window, out of which she had apparently been gazing with intense preoccupation. "Good-afternoon, Mr. Houghton." But he held out his hand with such imperative cordiality that she had to take it. Then he drew up a chair to the corner of the sofa on which she sat and placed it in a way that barred approach or egress. "Oh, shade of Mrs. Hunter!" she groaned inwardly, "what can I do? I'm fairly surrounded—all avenues of retreat cut off. I must face the enemy and fight."

"I knew the chance would come for us to get acquainted," said Houghton, settling himself complacently in the great armchair, "but I had scarcely hoped for such a happy opportunity as this so soon."

"I must go in a few minutes," she remarked demurely. "I have been here some time."

"Miss Bodine, you are not capable of such cruelty. You know it is very early yet."

"I thought you came to call on Mrs. Willoughby?"

"So I did, and I have called on her. See her talking ancient history to those dowagers yonder. What a figure I'd cut in that group."

She laughed outright, as much from nervous trepidation as at the comical idea suggested, and was in an inward rage that she did so, for she had intended to be so dignified and cool as to depress and discourage the "objectionable person" who hedged her in.

"What a jolly, infectious laugh you have!" he resumed. "To be able to laugh well is a rare accomplishment. Some snicker, others giggle, chuckle, cackle, make all sorts of disagreeable noises, but a natural, merry, musical laugh—Miss Bodine, I congratulate you, and myself also, that I happened in this blessed afternoon to hear it. And that terrible chaperon of yours isn't here either. How she frowned on me the other evening as if I were a wolf in the fold," and the young man broke into a clear ringing laugh at the recollection.

Ella was laughing with him in spite of herself. Indeed the more she tried to be grave and severe the more impossible it became.

"Mr. Houghton," she managed to say at last, "will you do me a favor?"

"Scores of them."

"Then stop making me laugh. I don't wish to laugh."

His face instantly assumed such portentous and awful gravity that he set her off again to such a degree that the dowagers in the other room looked at her rebukingly. It was bad enough, they thought, that she should talk to old Houghton's son at all, but to show such unbecoming levity —well, it was not what they would "expect of a Bodine." Ella saw their disapproval, and felt she was losing her self-

control. The warnings she had received against her companion embarrassed her, and banished the power to be her natural self.

"Please don't," she gasped, "or I shall go at once. I asked a favor."

"Pardon me, Miss Bodine," he now said in a tone and manner which quieted her nerves at once. "I have blundered again, but I was so happy to think that I had met you here. I am not wholly a rattle-brain. What would you like to talk about?" and he looked so kindly and eager to please her that she cast down her eyes and contracted her brow in deepest perplexity.

"Truly, Mr. Houghton, I should be on my way homeward, and you have so hedged me in that I cannot escape."

"Is running away from me escaping?"

"I don't like that phrase 'running away.'"

"Yet that is what you propose to do."

"Oh, no, I shall take my departure in a very composed and dignified manner."

His face had the expression of almost boyish distress. "You find on further thought that you cannot forgive me?" he asked sadly.

"Did I not say that was all explained and settled? Southern girls are not fickle or false to their word." And she managed to assume an aspect of great dignity. "If I do not shake him off in the next few minutes I'm lost," she thought.

"I've offended you again," he said anxiously.

She took refuge in silence.

"Miss Bodine, I ask your pardon. You know I can't do more than that, or if I can, tell me what. I wish to please you very much."

The girl was at her wit's end, for his ingenuous expression emphasized the truth of his words. "There is no reason why you should please me," she began coolly, and then knew not how to proceed.

"Let us be frank with each other," he resumed earnestly.

"We are too young yet to indulge in society lies. When a man apologizes at the North he is forgiven. I have been told that Southerners are a generous, warm-hearted people. In their cool treatment of me they counteract the climate. Are you, too, going to ostracize me?"

"I fear I shall have to," she replied faintly.

"Of your own free will?"

"No, indeed."

His heart gave a great throb of joy, but he had the sense to conceal his gladness. He only said quietly, "Well, I'm glad that you at least do not detest me."

"Why should I detest you, Mr. Houghton?"

"I'm sure I don't know why any one should. I have never harmed any one in this town that I know of."

She knew not how to answer, for she could not reflect upon his father.

"I don't care about others, but your case."

"Truly, Mr. Houghton," she began hastily, "this is a large city. A few impoverished Southern people are nothing to you."

"I was not thinking of Southern people," he replied gravely. "You said a moment since you saw no reason why I should try to please you. Am I to blame if you have inspired many reasons? I know you better than any girl in the world. You revealed your very self in a moment of danger to me as you thought. I saw that you were good and brave—that you possess just the qualities that I most respect and admire in a woman. Every moment I am with you confirms this belief. Why should I not wish to please you, to become your friend? I know I should be the better in every respect if you were my friend."

She shook her head, but did not venture to look at him.

"You believe I am sincere, Miss Bodine. You cannot think I am sentimental or flirtatious. I would no more do you wrong, even in my thoughts, than I would think evil of my dead mother. You are mirthful in your nature; so am I, but I do not think that either of us is shallow or silly.

If I am personally disagreeable, that ends everything, but how can a man secure the esteem and friendly regard of a woman, when he covets these supremely, unless he speaks and reveals his feelings?"

"You are talking wildly, Mr. Houghton," said Ella, with averted face. "We have scarcely more than met."

"You would lead me to think that you Southern people are tenfold colder and more deliberate than we of the North. You may not have thought of me since we met, but I have thought of you constantly. I could not help it."

Ella felt that she must escape now as if for her life, and, summoning all her faculties and resolution, she said, looking him in the eyes, "I've no doubt, Mr. Houghton, you think you are sincere in your words at this moment, but you may soon wonder that you spoke such hasty words."

"In proving you mistaken, time will be my ally.'

"You have asked me to be frank," she resumed. "In justice to you and myself I feel that I must be so. I do not share in the prejudices, if you prefer that word, of my father, but I must be governed by his wishes. I trust that you will not ask me to say more. Won't you please let me go now? See, the last guests are leaving."

"Tell me one thing," he pleaded eagerly as he rose. "I am not personally disagreeable to you?"

"The idea of my telling you anything of the kind!" and there was a flash of mirthfulness in her face which left him in a most tormenting state of uncertainty. A moment later she had shaken hands with Mrs. Willoughby, and was gone.

He stood looking after her, half-dazed by his conflicting feelings. Turning, Mrs. Willoughby saw and understood him at once. She came to his side and said kindly, "Sit down, Mr. Houghton, I've not had a chance to talk with you yet."

With an involuntary sigh he complied.

CHAPTER XXV

FEMININE FRIENDS

MRS. WILLOUGHBY was a woman of the world, yet in no bad sense. Indeed, beneath the veneer of fashionable life she possessed much kindliness of nature. She was capable of a good deal of cynicism toward those who she said "ought to be able to take care of themselves," and in this category she placed Clancy and Miss Ainsley. "I shall leave both to paddle their own canoes," she had said to herself.

Looking kindly at Houghton, who seemed to have lost his volubility, and waited for her to speak again, she thought: "If this young fellow was infatuated with Caroline I'd warn him quick enough." With the astuteness of a matron she merely remarked: "You seem greatly pleased with my little friend, Miss Bodine. You must not trifle with her, if she is poor, for she comes of one of the best families in the State."

"Trifle with Miss Bodine! What do you take me for, Mrs. Willoughby?" and he rose indignantly.

"There, now, sit down, my friend. I only said that so you might reveal how sincere you are, and I won't use any more diplomacy with you."

"I hope not," he replied laughing grimly. "You ought to know, what I am fast finding out, that a young fellow, like me, can no more understand a woman, unless she is frank, than he can Choctaw."

Mrs. Willoughby laughed heartily, and said: "I'll be frank with you, if you will be so with me."

"Then tell me why I am treated by so many in your set as if I had overrun the South with fire and sword?"

His first question proved that she could not be frank, for in order to give an adequate explanation she would have to reveal to him his father's animus and the hostility it evoked. She temporized by saying: "I do not so treat you, and surely Miss Bodine seemed to enjoy your conversation."

"I'm not so sure of that. At any rate she said she would have to ostracize me like the rest."

"She was kind in telling you that she would *have* to do so. She certainly bears you no ill-will."

"She probably does not care enough about me yet to do that. The worst of it is that I shall have no chance. Her father objects to her having anything to do with me, and that blocks everything. Even if I were capable of seeking a clandestine acquaintance, she is not. She is a thoroughly good girl; she doesn't know how to be deceitful."

"I'm glad you appreciate her so truly."

"I'd be a donkey if I didn't."

"Well, don't be unwise in your future action."

"What action can I take?" and he looked at her almost imploringly. A young man of his age is usually very ready to make a confidante of a married woman older than himself, yet young enough to sympathize with him in affairs of the heart. Houghton instinctively felt that the case might not be utterly hopeless if he could secure an ally in Mrs. Willoughby, for he recognized her tact, and believed that she was friendly. He promptly determined therefore to seek and to take her advice.

She looked at him searchingly as she said: "Perhaps it would be best not to take any action at all. If Miss Bodine has made only a passing and pleasant impression, and you merely desire to secure another agreeable acquaintance you had better stop where you are. It will save you much annoyance, and, what is of far more consequence, may keep her from real trouble. As you suggest, you cannot do anything in an underhand way. If you attempted it, you would

lose her respect instantly, your own also. She idolizes her father, and will not act contrary to his wishes. Why not let the matter drop where it is?"

"Can't take any such advice as that," he replied, shaking his head resolutely.

"Why not?"

"Oh, confound it! Suppose some one, years ago, had advised Mr. Willoughby in such style."

"Is it as serious as that?"

He passed his hand in perplexity over his brow. "Mrs. Willoughby, he burst out, "I'm in deep water. 'I reckon,' as you say here, you understand me better than I do myself. I only know that I'd face all creation for the sake of that girl, yet what you say about making her trouble, staggers me. I'm in sore perplexity, and don't know what to do."

"Will you take my advice?"

"Yes, I will, as long as I believe you are my honest friend, as long as I can."

"Well, you won't try to see Ella before you have consulted me?"

"I promise that."

"Don't do anything at present. Think the matter over quietly and conscientiously. I'm sorry I must make one other suggestion. I fear your father would be as much opposed to all this as Captain Bodine himself."

"I think not. My father is not so stern as he seems. At least he is not stern to me, and he has let me spend more money than my neck's worth. I fancy he is well disposed toward Captain Bodine, for he has given him employment. I asked the old gentleman about it one day, but he changed the subject. He wouldn't have employed the captain, however, unless he was interested in him some way."

"Why wouldn't he?"

'Oh, well, he naturally prefers to have Northerners about him.'

"Will you permit me to be a little more frank than I have been?"

"I supposed you were going to be altogether frank."

"For fear of hurting your feelings I have not been. Your father is not friendly to us, and we reciprocate. This makes it harder for you."

Houghton thought in silence for a few moments, and then said: "You should make allowance for an old man, half heart-broken by the death of his oldest son, drowned in the bay there."

"I do; so would others, if he were not vindictive, if he did not use his great financial strength against us."

"I don't think he does this, certainly not to my knowledge. He only seeks to make all he can, like other business men."

"Mr. Houghton, you haven't been very much in Charleston. Even your vacations have been spent mainly elsewhere, I think, and your mind has been occupied with your studies and athletics. You are more familiar with Greek and Roman history than with ours, and you cannot understand the feelings of persons like Captain Bodine and his cousin, old Mrs. Bodine, who passed through the agony of the war, and lost nearly everything—kindred, property, and what they deem liberty. You cannot understand your own father, who lost his son. You think of the present and future."

Houghton again sighed deeply as he said: "I admit the force of all you say. I certainly cannot feel as they do, nor perhaps understand them." Then he added: "I wouldn't if I could. Why should I tie the millstone of the past about my neck?"

"You should not do so; but you must make allowance for those to whom that past is more than the present or future can be."

"Why can't they forgive and forget, as far as possible, as you do?"

"Because people are differently constituted. Besides,

young man, I am not old enough to be your grandmother. I was very young at the time of the war, and have not suffered as have others."

"Grandmother, indeed! I should think that Mr. Willoughby would fall in love with you every day."

"The grand passion has a rather prominent place in your thoughts just now. Some day you will be like Mr. Willoughby, and cotton, stocks, or their equivalents, will take a very large share of your thoughts."

"Well, that day hasn't come yet. Even the wise man said there was a time for all things. How long must my probation last before I can come back for more advice?"

"A week, at least."

"Phew!"

"You must think it all over, as I said before, calmly and conscientiously. I have tried to enable you to see the subject on all its sides, and I tell you again that you may find just as much opposition from your father as from Captain Bodine. He may have very different plans for you. Ella Bodine has nothing but her own good heart to give you, supposing you were able to persuade her to give that much."

"That much would enrich me forever."

"Your father wouldn't see it in that light. He may call her that designing little baker."

"I hope he won't for God's sake. I never said a hot word to my father."

"Never do so, then. If you lose your temper, all is lost. But we are anticipating. Sober, second thoughts may lead you to save yourself and others a world of trouble."

"Oh! I've had second thoughts before. Good-by. At this hour, one week hence;" and he shook hands heartily.

A moment later, he came rushing back from the hall, exclaiming: "There! See, what a blunderbuss I am! I forgot to thank you, which I do, with all my heart."

"Ah!" sighed the mature woman, as her guest finally departed, "I'd take all his pains for the possibilities of his joys."

Ella had not been mistaken in thinking that she detected a trace of recklessness in Clancy's manner. He had been compelled to believe that Mara was in truth lost to him; that her will and pride would prove stronger than her heart. Indeed, he went so far as to believe that her heart, as far as he was concerned, was not giving her very much trouble.

"I fear she has become so morbid and warped by the malign influences that have surrounded her from infancy," he had thought, "that she cannot love as I love. My best hope now is, that when Bodine begins to show his game more clearly, she will remember my words. It's horrible to think that she may develop into a woman like Mrs. Hunter. Until this evening, I have always believed there was a sweet, womanly soul imprisoned in her bosom, but now I don't know what to think. I'll go off to the mountains on the pretence of a fishing excursion, and get my balance again."

The following morning had been spent in preparations, and the afternoon, as we have seen, found him at Mrs. Willoughby's. His sore heart and bitter mood were solaced by Miss Ainsley's unmistakable welcome. He knew he did not care for her in any deep and lasting sense, and he much doubted whether her interest in him was greater than that which she had bestowed upon others in the past. But she diverted his thoughts, flattered the self-love which Mara had wounded so ruthlessly, and above all fascinated him by her peculiar beauty and intellectual brilliancy.

"Why are you going away?" she asked reproachfully, when they were seated on the balcony.

"Oh, I've been working hard. I'm going off to the mountains to fish and rest."

"I hope you'll catch cold, and come back again soon."

"What a disinterested friend!"

"You are thinking only of yourself; why shouldn't I do likewise?"

"No, I'm thinking of you."

"Of course, at this minute. You'd be apt to think of a lamp-post if you were looking at it."

"Please don't put out the sunshine with your brilliancy."

"Ironical, too! What is the matter to-day?"

"What penetration! Reveal your intuitions. Have I failed in business, or been crossed in love?"

"The latter, I fancy."

"Well, then, how can I better recover peace of mind and serenity than by going a-fishing? You know what Izaak Walton says—"

"Oh, spare me, please, that ancient worthy! You are as cold-blooded as any fish that you'll catch. If I find it stupid in Charleston I'll go North."

"That threat shakes my very soul. I promise to come back in a week or ten days."

"Or a month or so," she added, looking hurt.

"Come, my good friend," he said, laughing. "We're too good fellows, as you wished we should be, to pretend to any forlornness over a parting of this kind. You will sleep as sweetly and dreamlessly as if you had never seen Owen Clancy, and I will write you a letter, such as a man would write to a man, telling you of my adventures. If I don't meet any I'll bring some about—get shot by the moonlighters, save a mountain maid from drowning in a trout pool, or fall into the embrace of a black bear."

"The mountain maid, you mean."

"Did I? Well, your penetration passes bounds."

"You may go, if you will write the letter. There must be no dime-novel stories in it, no drawing on your imagination. It shall be your task to make interesting just what you see and do."

"Please add the twelve labors of Hercules."

"No trifling. I'm in earnest, and put you on your mettle in regard to that letter. Unless you do your best, your friendship is all a pretence. And remember what you said about its being a letter to a man. If you begin in a conventional way, as if writing to a lady, I'll burn it without reading."

"Agreed. Good-by, old fellow — beg pardon, Miss Ainsley."

She laughed and said, "I like that; good-by." And she gave him a warm, soft hand, in a rather lingering clasp.

When he was gone she murmured softly, "Yes, he has a chance."

CHAPTER XXVI

ELLA'S CRUMB OF COMFORT

ELLA walked up Meeting Street in a frame of mind differing widely from the complacent mood in which she sought Mrs. Willoughby's residence. The unexpected had again happened, and to her it seemed so strange, so very remarkable, that she should have met Mr. Houghton once more without the slightest intention, or even expectation, on her part, that she was perplexed and troubled. What did it mean?

In matters purely personal, and related closely to our own interests, we are prone to give almost a superstitious significance to events which come about naturally enough. It was not at all strange that Houghton should have been strongly and agreeably impressed by Ella from the first; and that he should happen to call at the same hour that she did, would have been regarded by her as a very ordinary coincidence, had not the case been her own. Since it was her own, she was almost awed by the portentous interview from which she had just escaped. The inexperienced girl found her cherished ideas in respect to young Houghton completely at fault. She had sighed that she could not meet him without restraint or embarrassment, for, as she had assured herself, "It would be such fun." She had supposed that she could laugh at him and with him indefinitely—that he would be a source of infinite jest and amusement. He had banished all these illusions in a few brief moments. How could she make sport of a man who had coupled her name with that of his dead mother? His every glance, word, and tone expressed sincere respect and admi-

ration, and, she had to admit to herself, something more. She was so sincere herself, so unsullied, so lacking in the callousness often resulting from much contact with the world, that it seemed to her that it would be a profanation henceforth to regard him as the butt of even the innocent ridicule of which she was capable. Yet in all her perplexity and trouble there was a confused exhilaration and a glad sense of power.

"To think that I, little Ella Bodine, a baker by trade," she thought, "should have inspired that big fellow to talk as he did! He is apology embodied, and seems far more afraid of me than he was of that great bully on the street." And she bent her head to conceal a laugh of exultation.

Then she remembered her father, and her face grew troubled. "I shall have to tell him," she murmured, "and then the old scene will be enacted over again. A plague on that old shadow of the war! If I were a man I'd fight it out and then shake hands."

Soon after reaching home she heard her father's crutches on the sidewalk, and ran down to meet him. In accordance with her custom, she took away one crutch, and supported him to a chair in the parlor. He kissed her fondly, and remarked, "You look a little pale, Ella."

"I feel pale, papa. I've something to tell you, and you must listen patiently and sensibly. I've met Mr. Houghton again."

The veteran's face darkened instantly, but he waited till she explained further.

"Now see how you begin to look," she resumed. "You are judging me already. You can't be even fair to your own child."

"It would rather seem that you are judging me, Ella."

"Oh, bother it all!" she exclaimed. "I wish I could be simple and natural in this affair, for I was so embarrassed and constrained that I fear I acted like a fool. Well, I'll tell you how it happened. After lunch I asked Cousin Sophy if it was not time for me to make my party call on

Mrs. Willoughby, and she said it was. I found that Mrs. Willoughby was expecting callers. We chatted a few minutes, and then others came, Mr. Houghton among them. I no more expected to meet him than I expected to meet you there. After shaking hands with Mrs. Willoughby he came to me in the back parlor instantly, and drew up a chair so that I could not escape unless I jumped over him. He began with such funny speeches that I got laughing, as much from nervousness as anything else, for I'd been so warned against him that I couldn't be myself."

"You shall not go to Mrs. Willoughby's again," said her father, decidedly.

"Now please listen till I'm all through. He soon saw that I did not want to laugh, and stopped his nonsense. He wanted to become acquainted, friendly, you know; and finally I had to tell him that it couldn't be—that I must be governed by your wishes."

"Ah, that was my dear, good, sensible girl!"

"No, papa, I don't feel sensible at all. On the contrary, I have a mean, absurd feeling—just as if I had gone to Mrs. Willoughby's and slapped a child because it was a Northern child."

He laughed at this remark, for she unconsciously gave the impression that she had been more repellant than had actually been true. He soon checked himself, however, and said gravely, "Ella, you take these things too seriously."

"No, papa, it seems to me that it is you and Cousin and Mara who take these things too seriously. What harm has that young fellow ever done any of us?"

"He could do me an immense deal of harm if you gave him your thoughts, and became even friendly. I should be exceedingly unhappy."

"Oh, well! that isn't possible—I mean, that we should become friendly. I certainly won't permit him to speak to me in the streets, although I spoke to him once in the street. Oh, I'm going to tell you everything now!" and she related the circumstances of her first meeting with Houghton.

"All this is very painful to me," her father said, with clouded brow. "But, as you say, it has come about without intention on your part. I am glad you have told me everything, for now I can better guard you from future mischances. My relations to this young man's father are such that it would make it very disagreeable, indeed, positively unendurable, if his son should seek your society. You should also remember that Mr. Houghton would be as bitterly hostile to any such course on his son's part as I am. Your pride, apart from my wishes, should lead you to repel the slightest advance."

"I reckon your wishes will have the most influence, papa. I have too strong a sense of justice to punish the son on account of his father."

"You cannot separate them, Ella. Think of our own relation. What touches one touches the other."

"Well, papa, it's all over, and I've told you everything. Since I'm not to go to Mrs. Willoughby's any more, there is little probability that I shall meet him again, except in the street. If he bows to me, I shall return the courtesy with quiet dignity, for he has acted like a gentleman toward me, and, for the sake of my own self-respect, I must act like a lady toward him. If he seeks to talk to me, I shall tell him it is forbidden, and that will end it, for he is too honorable to attempt anything clandestine."

"I'm not sure of that."

"I am, papa. He wouldn't be such an idiot, for he understands me well enough to know what would be the result of that kind of thing. But he isn't that kind of a man."

"How should you know what kind of a man he is?"

"Oh, Heaven has provided us poor women with intuitions!"

"True, to a certain extent, but the rule is proved by an awful lot of exceptions."

"Perhaps if they were studied out, inclinations rather than intuitions were followed."

"Well, my dear, we won't discuss these vague questions.

Your duty is as simple and clear as mine is. Do as you have promised, and all will be well. I must now dress for dinner." And kissing her affectionately, he went up to his room.

She took his seat, and looked vacantly out of the window, with a vague dissatisfaction at heart. Unrecognized fully as yet, the great law of nature, which brings to each a distinct and separate existence, was beginning to operate. As she had said to Mara, vital interests were looming up, new experiences coming, of which she could no more think his thoughts than he hers.

Her face was a little clouded when she sat down to dinner, and she observed Mrs. Bodine looking at her keenly. Instinctively she sought to conceal her deeper feelings, and to become her mirthful self.

"You have not told me about your call yet," the old lady remarked.

"Well, I felt that papa should have the first recital. I met again the son of that old—ahem!—Mr. Houghton, and I have begun to ostracize him."

"Ella," said her father, almost sternly, "do not speak in that way. Our feelings are strong, sincere, and well-grounded."

"There, papa, I did not mean to reflect lightly upon them. Indeed, I was not thinking of them, but of Mr. Houghton."

"Oh, Cousin Hugh! let the child talk in her own natural way. She wouldn't scratch one of your crutches with a pin, much less hurt you."

"Forgive me, Ella," he said, "I misunderstood you."

"Yes, in the main, papa, but to be frank, I don't enjoy this ostracizing business, and I hope I won't have any more of it to do."

"There is no reason why you should. Cousin Sophy, there should be people enough in Charleston for Ella to visit without the chance of meeting Mr. Houghton, or any of his ilk."

"So there are. I'll manage that. Well, Ella, how did you set about ostracizing young Houghton?" And the old lady began to laugh.

"It's no laughing matter," said Ella, shaking her head ruefully. "He was frank and polite and respectful as any young gentleman would be under similar circumstances, and he wanted to become better acquainted, call on me, I suppose, and all that, but I had to tell him virtually that he was an objectionable person."

"I would rather this subject should not be discussed any further," said her father gravely.

"So would I," Ella added. "Papa and I have settled the matter, and Mr. Houghton is to recede below the horizon."

The old lady thought that when Ella was alone with her she would get all the details of the interview, but she was mistaken. The girl not only grew more and more averse to speaking of Houghton, but she also felt that what he had said so frankly and sincerely to her was not a proper theme for gossip, even with kindly old Mrs. Bodine, and that a certain degree of loyalty was due to him, as well as to her father and cousin.

The captain had some writing on hand that night, and Ella read aloud to her cousin till it was time to retire. Apparently the evening passed uneventfully away; yet few recognize the eventful hours of their lives. A subtle and mysterious change was taking place in the girl's nature which in time she would recognize. More than once she murmured, "How can I be hostile to him? He said he could no more do me wrong, even in his thoughts, than think evil of his dead mother. He said he would be better if I were his friend, and he is as good-hearted this minute as I am. Yet I must treat him as if he were not fit to be spoken to. Well, I reckon it will hurt me as much as it does him. There's some comfort in that."

CHAPTER XXVII

RECOGNIZED AS LOVER

IT was inevitable that Mara should pay the penalty of being at variance with nature and her own heart. The impulses of youth had been checked and restrained. Instead of looking forward, like Ella, she was turning ever backward, and drawing her inspiration from the past, and a dead, hopeless past, at that. It fell upon her like a shadow. All its incentive tended toward negation, prompting her to frown on changes, progress, and the hopefulness springing up in many hearts. The old can hug their gloom in a sort of complacent misanthropy; the young cannot. If they are unhappy they chafe, and feel in their deepest consciousness that something is wrong. Mara laid the blame chiefly upon Clancy, believing that, if he had taken the course adopted by Captain Bodine, she could have been happy with him in an attic. His words, at their interview, were not the only causes of her intense indignation and passion. Although she was incensed to the last degree, that he should charge Captain Bodine with such "preposterous" motives and intentions, she was also aware that her fierce struggles with her own heart, at the time, distracted and confused her. She could not maintain the icy demeanor she had resolved upon.

Left to herself, the long afternoon and evening of the following day, she had time for many second thoughts. She was compelled to face in solitude the hard problems of her life. Anger died out, and its support was lost. She had driven away the only man she loved, or could ever love, and she had used language which he could never

forget, or be expected to forgive. The more she thought of his motive in seeking the interview, the more perplexed and troubled she became. As now in calmer mood she recalled his words and manner, she could not delude herself with the belief that he came only in his own behalf, or that he was prompted by jealousy. She remembered the grim frankness with which he said virtually that he had nothing to hope from her, not even tolerance. She almost writhed under the fact that he had again compelled her to believe that, however mistaken, he was sincere and straightforward, that he truly thought that Bodine was lover rather than friend.

She would not, could not, imagine that this was true, and yet she groaned aloud, "He has destroyed my chief solace. I was almost happy with my father's friend, and was coming to think of him almost as a second father. Now, when with him I shall have a miserable self-consciousness, and a disposition to interpret his words and manner in a way that will do him hateful wrong. Oh, what is there for me to look forward to? What is the use of living?"

These final words indicated one of Mara's chief needs. She craved some motive, some powerful incentive, which could both sustain and inspire. Mere existence, with its ordinary pleasures and interests, did not satisfy her at all. Clancy's former question in regard to her devotion to the past and the dead, "What good will it do?" haunted her like a spectre. He had again made the dreary truth more clear, that there was nothing in the future to which she could give the strong allegiance of her soul. She would work for nothing, suffer for nothing, hope for nothing, except her daily bread. As she said, the friendship of Bodine was but a solace, great indeed, but inadequate to the deep requirements of a nature like hers. She knew she was leading a dual life—cold, reserved, sternly self-restrained outwardly, yet longing with passionate desire for the love she had rejected, and, since that was impossible, for some-

thing else, to which she could consecrate her life, with the feeling that it was worth the sacrifice. If she had been brought up in the Roman Catholic religion, she might have been led to the austere life of a nun. But, in her morbid condition, she was incapable of understanding the wholesome faith, the large, sweet liberty of those who remain closely allied to humanity in the world, yet purifying and saving it, by the sympathetic tenderness of Him who had "compassion on the multitude." She had still much to learn in the hard school of experience.

The next day, Ella was nothing like so voluble as usual. Little frowns and moments of deep abstraction took the place of the mirthful smiles of the day before. Nevertheless, her strong love for Mara led her to speak quite freely of her experience during her call at Mrs. Willoughby's. As Mara's closest friend, she felt that reticence was a kind of disloyalty. It was also true that out of the abundance of her heart she was prone to speak. At the same time, the belief grew stronger hourly that she had a secret which she had not revealed, and could not reveal to any one. The more she thought over Houghton's words and manner, the more sure she became that his interest in her was not merely a passing fancy. Maidenly reserve, however, forbade even a hint of what might seem to others a conceited and indelicate surmise. She therefore gave only the humorous side of her meeting with Houghton again, and laughed at Mara's vexation. So far from being afraid of her friend, she rather enjoyed shocking her. At last she said, "There, Mara, don't take it so to heart. Papa says I must ostracize him, and so Goth and Vandal he becomes—the absurd idea!"

"Your father would not require you to do anything absurd."

"No, not what was absurd to him; but he does not know Mr. Houghton any more than you do. It's not only absurd, but it's wrong, from my point of view."

"Oh, Ella, I'm sorry you feel so different from the rest of us."

"Why do you feel different from so many others, Mara? It isn't to please this or that one, or because you have been told to think or to feel thus and so. You have your views and convictions because you are Mara Wallingford, and not some one else. Am I made of putty any more than you are, sweetheart?"

Her words were like a stab to Mara, for the thought flashed into her mind, "I have required that Clancy should be putty under my will." Ella, in her simple common-sense, often made remarks which disturbed Mara's cherished belief that she was right and Clancy all wrong.

As a very secondary matter of interest to her, Ella at last began to speak of Clancy and Miss Ainsley. "If ever a girl courted a man with her eyes that feminine riddle courts Mr. Clancy. I don't think I ever could be so far gone as to look at a man as she does at him, unless I was engaged."

"How does he look at her?" Mara asked with simulated indifference.

"Oh, there's some freemasonry between them, probably an engagement or an understanding! She expostulated against his going away as if she had the right. I don't think he cares for her as I would wish a man to care for me, for there was a humorous, half-reckless gleam in his eyes. It may be all natural enough though," she added musingly. "I don't believe Miss Ainsley could inspire an earnest, reverent love. A man wouldn't associate her in his thoughts with his dead mother."

"What a strange expression! What put it into your mind?"

"Oh," replied Ella hastily, and flushing a little, "I've been told that Mr. Clancy's parents are dead! A plague on them both, and all people that I can't understand—I don't mean the dead Clancys, but these two who are fooling like enough. You should be able to interpret Clancy better than I, for Cousin Sophy says you were once very good friends."

"I cannot remain the friend of any one who is utterly out of sympathy with all that I believe is right and dignified."

"Well, Mara, forgive me for saying it, but Mr. Clancy may have had convictions also."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mara coldly, "but there can be no agreeable companionship between clashing minds."

"No, I suppose not," said Ella, laughing; "not if each insists that both shall think exactly alike. It would be like two engines meeting on the same track. They must both back out, and go different ways."

"Well, I've back out," Mara remarked almost sternly.

"That's like you, Mara dear. Well, well, I hope the war will be over some day. By the way, papa told me to tell you that he was busy last evening, but that he would call this afternoon for a breathing with you on the Battery."

At the usual hour the veteran appeared. Mara's greeting was outwardly the same; nevertheless, Clancy's words haunted her, and her old serene unconsciousness was gone. Now that her faculties were on the alert, she soon began to recognize subtle, unpremeditated indications of the light in which Bodine had begun to regard her, and a sudden fear and repugnance chilled her heart. "Was Clancy right after all?" she began to ask herself in a sort of dread and presentiment of trouble. Instinctively, and almost involuntarily, she grew slightly reserved and distant in manner, ceasing to meet his gaze in her former frank, affectionate way. With quick discernment he appreciated the change, and thought, "She is not ready yet, and, indeed, may never be ready." His manner, too, began to change, as a cloud gradually loses something of its warmth of color. Mara was grateful, and in her thoughts paid homage to his tact and delicacy.

"Mara," he said, "has Ella told you of her experiences at Mrs. Willoughby's?"

"Yes, quite fully. I should think, however, from her words that you were more truly her confidant."

"Yes, she has acted very honorably, just as I should

expect she would, and yet I am anxious about her. I wish she sympathized with us more fully in our desire to live apart from those who are inseparable in our thoughts from the memory of 'all our woes,' as Milton writes."

"I have often expressed just this regret to Ella; but she loves us all, and especially you, so dearly that I have no anxiety about her action."

"No, Mara, not her action; I can control that: but I should be sorry indeed if she became interested in this young man. There is often a perversity about the heart not wholly amenable to reason."

Poor Mara thought she knew the truth of this remark if any one did, nor could she help fancying that her companion had himself in mind when he spoke.

"Young Houghton," he resumed, "is beginning to make some rather shy, awkward advances, as if to secure my favor —a very futile endeavor as you can imagine. My views are changing in respect to remaining in his father's employ. The grasping old man would monopolize everything. I believe he would impoverish the entire South if he could, and I don't feel like remaining a part of his infernal business-machine."

"I don't wonder you feel so!" exclaimed Mara warmly. "I don't like to think of your being there at all."

"That settles it then," said Bodine quietly. "It would not be wise or honorable for me to act hastily. I must give Mr. Houghton proper notification, but I shall at once begin to seek other employment."

Mara was embarrassed and pained by such large deference to her views, and her spirits grew more and more depressed with the conviction that Clancy was right. But she had been given time to think, and soon believed that her best, her only course, was to ignore that phase of the captain's regard, and to teach him, with a delicacy equal to his own, that it could never be accepted.

"Moreover," resumed Bodine, "apart from my duty to Mr. Houghton—and I must be more scrupulous toward him

than if he were my best friend—I owe it to Ella and my cousin not to give up the means of support, if I can honorably help it, until I secure something else. Houghton has held to our agreement both in spirit and letter, and I cannot complain of him as far as I am concerned."

"I have confidence in your judgment, Captain, and I know you will always be guided by the most delicate sense of honor."

"I hope so, Mara; I shall try to be, but with the best endeavor we often make mistakes. To tell the truth I am more anxious about Ella than myself. This young Houghton is, I fear, a rather hair-brained fellow. I've no doubt that he is sincere and well-meaning enough as rich and indulged young men of his class go, but he appears to me to be impetuous, and inclined to be reckless in carrying out his own wishes. Ella, in her inexperience, has formed far too good an opinion of him."

"Well, Captain, I wouldn't worry about it. Ella is honest as the sunshine. They have scarcely more than met, and she will be guided by you. This episode will soon be forgotten."

"Yes, I hope so; I think so. I shall count on your influence, for she loves you dearly."

"I know," was the rather sad reply, "but Ella does not think and feel as I do. I wish she could become interested in some genuine Southern man."

"That will come in time, all too soon for me, I fear," he said, with a sigh, "but I must accept the fact that my little bird is fledged, and may soon take flight. It will be a lonely life when she is gone."

"She may not go far," Mara answered gently, "and she may enrich you with a son, instead of depriving you of a daughter."

He shook his head despondently, and soon afterward accompanied her to her home. She knew there was something like an appeal to her in his eyes as he pressed her hand warmly in parting. By simply disturbing the blind

confidence in which she had accepted and loved her father's friend, Clancy had given her sight. She saw the veteran in a new character, and she was distressed and perplexed beyond measure. Scarcely able, yet compelled to believe the truth, she asked herself all the long night, "How can I bear this new trouble?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

"HEAVEN SPEED YOU THEN"

AUN' SHEBA and Vilet entered at the usual hour the following day. The girls smiled and nodded in an absent sort of way, and then the old woman thought they seemed to forget all about her. She also observed that they were not so forward with the work as customary; and she watched them wonderingly yet shrewdly. Suddenly she sprang up, exclaiming, "Lor bress you, Missy Ella, dat de secon' time you put aw-spice in dat ar dough."

Both the girls started nervously, and Ella began to laugh.

"Missy Mara, you fergits some cake in de oben from de way it smell," and Aun' Sheba drew out cookies as black as herself instead of a delicate brown.

Mara looked at them ruefully, and then said, "I must make some more, that's all."

"Wot's de matter wid you bofe, honeys?" the old woman asked kindly.

"Politics," Ella blurted out.

"Polytics! No won'er you'se bofe off de handle. Dere's been only two times wen I couldn't stan' Unc. nohow. De fust an' wust was wen he get polytics on de brain, an' belebed dat ole guv'ner Moses was gwine ter lead de culud people to a promis' lan'. I alus tole him dat his Moses 'ud lead him into a ditch, an' so he did. De secon' time was wen he got sot on, but you knows all 'bout dat. You'se bofe too deep fer me. How you git into polytics I doan see nohow."

"There, Aun' Sheba, don't you mind Ella's nonsense. We're no more into politics than you are."

"You'se inter sump'in den."

"Yes," said Ella, "we're still carrying on the war."

"Please don't talk so, Ella."

"Oh, Mara! I must have my nonsense. You've got the 'storied past'—that's how it's phrased, isn't it?—to sustain you, and I've only my nonsense."

"Well, puttin' in aw-spice double is nonsense, shuah nuff," said Aun' Sheba, looking at the girl keenly. "Wot you want spicin' so fer all't once, Missy Ella? You peart, an' saucy as eber. I ony wish I could see Missy Mara lookin' like you."

"You are getting old and blind, Aun' Sheba. I have a secret sorrow gnawing at my 'inards,' as you term those organs which keep people awake o' nights, gazing at the moon."

"Yes, honey, Aun' Sheba gittin' bery ole an' bery blin', but she see dat dere's sump'in out ob kilter wid de inards ob you bofe. Well, well, I s'pose it's none ob de ole woman's business."

"Aun' Sheba," cried Ella, with an exaggerated sigh, "if you could mend matters I'd come to you quicker than to any one else, you dear old soul! Well now, to tell you the honest truth, there isn't very much the matter with me, and there's a certain doctor that's going to cure me just as sure as this batter (holding up a spoonful) is going to be cake in ten minutes."

"Who dat?"

"Doctor Time—oh, get out!" At this instant an irate bumble-bee darted in, and Ella, in a spasmodic effort of self-defence, threw the spoon at it, and both went flying out of the window. The girl sat down half-crying, half-laughing in her vexation, while Aun' Sheba shook with mirth in all her ample proportions.

"Dat ar cake's gwine to be dough for eber mo', Missy Ella," she said. "I'se feerd you'se case am bery serus. Yit

I worries mo' 'bout Missy Mara. Heah now, honey, you jes dun beat out. You sit down an' Missy Ella an' me'll finish up in a jiffy. I reckon Missy Ella ony got a leetle tantrum dis mawnin, but you'se been a wuckin' an' tinkin' too hard dis long time."

"Yes, Aun' Sheba," cried Ella, "that's the trouble. Let's you and I take the business out of her hands for a time, and make her a silent partner."

"She too silent now. Bofe ob you gittin' ter be silent par'ners. In de good ole times I'd heah you chatterin' as I come up de stars, an' to-day you was bofe right smart ways off from dis kitchen in you mins. Mum, mum, tinkin' deep, bofe ob you. Eysters ud make a racket long ob you uns dis mawnin'."

"There, Aun' Sheba," said Mara, kindly, "don't you worry about us. This is July, and in August we'll take a rest. You deserve and need it as much as either of us. I'll get well and strong then, and you know it makes people worse to tell them they don't look well and all that."

Aun' Sheba gave a sort of dissatisfied grunt, but she helped the girls through with their tasks in her own deft way, and departed with Vilet, who was always very quiet and shy except when at home.

"Well," said Ella, giving herself a little shake, when they were alone, "I'm going to get over my nonsense at once."

"What's troubling you, Ella?"

"Oh, I hardly know myself. What's troubling you? We both seem out of sorts. Do let us be sensible and jolly. Now if we both had a raging toothache we'd have some excuse for melancholy. Good-by, dear, I'll be up with the lark to-morrow, and we'll make a lark of our work;" and she started homeward, with her cherry lips sternly compressed in her resolution to be her old mirthful self. In the energy of her purpose she began to walk faster and faster. "There now, Ella Bodine," she muttered, "since it's your duty to ostracize and bake, *ostracize* and *bake*, and

be done with your ridiculous fancies." And she swiftly turned the corner of a street, as if, under the inspiration of a great purpose, she was entering upon a new and wiser course. The result was, she nearly ran over George Houghton. Looking up, she saw him standing, hat in hand, with a broad, glad smile on his face.

"You almost equal that express-wagon," he said. "Are you going for the doctor?"

Her mouth twitched nervously, but she managed to say, "Good-morning, Mr. Houghton, I'm in haste," and on she went. He saw her head go down. Was she laughing or crying? The latter possibility brought him to her side instantly.

"Are you in trouble?" he asked very kindly. "Isn't there something—oh, I see you are laughing at me," and his tones proved that his feelings were deeply hurt.

Her mirth ceased at once. "No, Mr. Houghton," she replied, looking up at him with frank directness, "I was not laughing at *you*, but I could not help laughing at what you said. I'm in no trouble, nor shall I be if—if—well, you know what I told you. We must be strangers, you know," and she went on again as if her feet were winged.

"I don't know anything of the kind," he muttered, as he turned on his heel and slowly pursued his way to his father's counting-rooms. Entering he paused an instant and looked grimly at Bodine, whose head was bent over his writing. "I'll tackle you next, old gentleman," was his thought.

Punctually to a minute he called on Mrs. Willoughby when the week had expired. She looked into his resolute face and surmised before he spoke that time and reflection had not inclined him to a prudent withdrawal from a very doubtful suit. Nevertheless she said: "Well, you've had a little time to think, and you probably see now that your wisest course will be to give up this little affair utterly."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Willoughby, I've had an age in which to think, and it's not a little affair to me. I did not quite

understand myself when I last saw you—it was all so new, strange, and heavenly. But I understand myself now. Ella Bodine shall be my wife unless she finally rejects me, unless she herself makes me sure that it's of no use to try. What's more, it will take years to prove this. As long as she does not belong to another I'll never give up."

"She belongs to her father."

"No, not in this sense. She has the right of every American girl to choose her husband."

"Do you mean to defy her father?"

"No, I mean to go to him like a gentleman, and ask permission to pay my addresses to his daughter. I mean to do this before I say one word of love to her."

"Since you are so resolved upon your course you do not need any more advice from me."

"I don't mean that at all. Isn't this the right, honorable course?"

"Oh, your royalty wishes me to applaud your decrees and decisions," she said laughing.

"Now please don't be hard on me, Mrs. Willoughby. I've followed your advice with all my might for a week."

"Done nothing with all your might?"

"Yes, and you couldn't have given me a harder task."

"Are you of age?"

"Yes, I am. I'm twenty-two, however immature I may seem to you."

"Miss Bodine is not of age."

"Well, I'll wait till she is."

"Wouldn't that be better? Wait till she is of age, and more capable of judging and acting for herself. Time may soften her father's feelings, and your father's also, for, believe me, you are going to have as much trouble at home as with Captain Bodine, that is, supposing that Ella would listen to your suit."

"And while I'm idly biting my nails through the creeping years some level-headed Southerner will quietly woo and

win her. I would deserve to lose her, should I take such a course."

"You certainly would have to take that risk; but perhaps you will incur greater risks by too hasty action."

"Be sincere with me now, Mrs. Willoughby. I don't believe you women like timid, pusillanimous men. How could I appear otherwise to Miss Bodine if I should withdraw, like a growling bear into winter quarters, there to hibernate indefinitely? The period wouldn't be life to me, scarcely tolerable existence. What could she know about my motives and feelings? I tell you my love is as sacred as my faith in God. I'm proud of it, rather than ashamed. I wish her to know it, no matter what the result may be, and I don't care if all the world knows it, too."

"You mean to tell your father then?"

"Certainly, at the proper time."

"Suppose you find him utterly opposed to it all?"

"I do not think I shall; not when he sees my happiness is at stake. He may fume over it for a time, but when he comes to know Ella she'll disarm him. Why, it's just as clear to me as that I see you, that she could make the old gentleman happier than he has been for over a quarter of a century."

"My poor young friend! I wish I could share in your sanguine feelings."

"Oh, I'm not so very sanguine about her. What she will do worries me far more than what the old people will do."

"Well, you are right there. The old people are the outworks, she the citadel, which you can never capture unless she chooses to surrender."

"That's true, but I don't believe she ever would surrender to a man who was afraid to approach even the outworks."

Mrs. Willoughby laughed softly as she admitted, "Perhaps you are right."

"If I'm not, my whole manhood is at fault," he replied

earnestly. "Please tell me, haven't I decided on the right, honorable course—on what would seem honorable to Captain Bodine and to Ella also?"

"Yes, if you *will* act now you can take no other."

"Well, won't you please approve of it?"

"Mr. Houghton, I'm not going to be timid and pusillanimous either. Since you are of age, and will take a perfectly honorable course, I will stand by you as a friend. I will still counsel you, if you so wish, for I fear that your troubles have only begun."

"I thank you from my heart," he said, seizing her hand and pressing it warmly. "I do need and wish your counsel, for I have very little tact. I can sail a boat better than I can manage an affair like this."

"Will you make me one solemn promise?"

"Yes, if I can."

"Then pledge me your word that you will not lose your temper with either Captain Bodine or your father."

"Oh, I think I can easily do that," he said good-humoredly.

"You don't know, you can't imagine, how you may be tried."

"Well, it's a sensible thing you ask, and I've sense enough to know it. I pledge you my word. If I break it, it will be because I'm pushed beyond mortal endurance."

"Mr. Houghton," she said, almost sternly, "you must not break it, no matter what is said or what happens. You would jeopardize everything if you did. You might lose Ella's respect."

He drew a long breath. "You make me feel as if I were going into a very doubtful battle," he said thoughtfully.

"It is a very doubtful battle. It certainly will be a hard, and probably a long one, and you will lose it if you don't keep cool."

"I can be very firm, I suppose."

"Yes, as firm and decided as you please, as long as you are quiet and gentlemanly in your words. Let me say one

thing more," she added, very gravely. "If you enter on this affair, and then, in any kind of weakness or fickleness, give it up, I shall despise you, and so will all in this city who know about it. Count the cost. I'm too true a Southerner to look at you again if you trifle with a Southern girl. Your father will offer you great inducements to abandon this folly, as he will term it."

He flushed deeply, but only said, in quiet emphasis, "If I ever give up, except for reasons satisfactory to you, I shall despise myself far more than you can despise me."

"And you give me your word that you will keep your temper to the very end?"

"Yes, Heaven helping me, I will."

"Heaven speed you then, my friend."

CHAPTER XXIX

CONSTERNATION

YOUNG Houghton was like a high-mettled steed, from which the curb had been removed. His temperament, even more than the impatience of youth, led him to chafe at delay, and Ella appeared so lovely, so exactly to his mind, that he had a nervous dread lest others should equally appreciate her, and forestall his effort to secure her affection. He resolved, therefore, that not an hour should be lost, and so went directly back to his father's counting-rooms.

Bodine was writing as usual at his desk, and Houghton looked at him with an apprehension thus far unknown in his experience. But he did not hesitate. "Captain Bodine," he said, with a little nervous tremor in his voice, "will you be so kind as to grant me a private interview this evening?"

The veteran looked at him coldly as he asked, "May I inquire, sir, your object in seeking this interview?"

"I will explain fully when we are alone. I cannot here, but will merely say that my motives are honorable, as you yourself will admit."

Bodine contracted his brows in painful thought for a moment. "I may as well have it out with him at once," was his conclusion. "Very well, sir, I will remain after the office is closed," he said frigidly, then turned to his writing.

George went to his desk in his father's private room, and there was a very grim, set look on his face also. "I understand you, my future father-in-law," he murmured softly.

"You think you are going to end this affair in half an hour. We'll see."

The afternoon was very warm, and his father said kindly, "Come, George, knock off for to-day. I'm going home and shall try to get a nap before dinner."

"That's right, father; do so by all means. I have an engagement this evening, so please don't wait dinner for me." His thought was, "If I'm to keep my temper I can't tackle more than one the same day; yet I don't believe my father will be obdurate. If I succeed, the time will come when he'll thank me with all his heart."

Mr. Houghton had no disposition to control his son in small matters, and the young fellow came and went at his own will. Thus far his frankness and general good behavior had inspired confidence. His tastes had always inclined to athletic, manly sports, and these are usually at variance with dissipation of every kind.

The impatient youth had not long to wait. The clerks soon departed, and the colored janitor entered on his labors. Bodine remained writing quietly until George came and said, "Will you be so kind as to come to the private office?"

The veteran deliberately put his desk in order, and followed the young man without a word. There was still an abundance of light in which to see each other's faces, and George observed that Bodine's expression boded ill. He took a seat in silence, and looked at the flushed face of the youth coldly and impassively.

"Captain Bodine," George began hesitatingly, "you can make this interview very hard for me, and I fear you will do so. Yet you are a gentleman, and I wish to act and speak as becomes one also."

Bodine merely bowed slightly.

"I will use no circumlocution. You have been a soldier, and so will naturally prefer directness. I wish your permission to pay my addresses to your daughter."

"I cannot grant it."

"Please do not make so hasty a decision, sir. I fear that you are greatly prejudiced against me, but—"

"No, sir," interrupted Bodine, "I am not prejudiced against you at all. I have my own personal reasons for taking the ground I do, and it is not necessary to discuss them. I think our interview may as well end at once."

"Captain Bodine, you will admit that I have acted honorably in this matter. Since your daughter told me that you were averse to our acquaintance, I have made no effort to see her."

"Certainly, sir, that was right and honorable. Any other course would not have been so."

"It is my purpose to maintain a strictly honorable and straightforward course in this suit."

"Do you mean to say that you will pursue this suit contrary to my wishes?"

"Certainly. There is no law, human or divine, which forbids a man from loving a good woman, and Miss Bodine is good if any one is."

"How do you propose to carry on this suit?" the captain asked sternly.

"I scarcely know yet, but in no underhand way. I must ask you to inform Miss Bodine of this interview."

"Suppose I decline to do this?"

"Then I shall make it known to her myself."

"In other words, you defy me."

"Not at all, not in the sense in which you speak. I shall take no action whatever without your knowledge."

"You must remember that my daughter is not of age."

"I do not dispute your right in the least to control her action till she is, but I shall not take the risk of losing her by timidity and delay. Others will appreciate her worth as well as myself. I wish her to know that I love her, and would make her my wife."

"You appear to think that this is all that is essential so far as she is concerned," said Bodine, in bitter sarcasm.

"You do me wrong, sir," Houghton replied, flushing

hotly. "Even if you should give your full consent, I, better than any one, know that my suit would be doubtful. But it would be hopeless did I not reveal to her my feelings and purposes."

"If she herself, then, informs you that it *is* hopeless, that would end the matter?"

"Certainly, after years of patient effort to induce her to think otherwise."

"I do not think you have shown any patience thus far, sir. You have scarcely more than met her before you enter, recklessly and selfishly, on a 'suit,' as you term it, which can only bring wretchedness to her and to those who have the natural right to her allegiance and love."

"You do me wrong again, Captain Bodine. I am no more reckless or selfish than any other man who would marry the girl he loves. By reason of circumstances over which I had no control I have met Miss Bodine, and she has inspired a sacred love, such as her mother inspired in you. You can find no serious fault with me personally, and I am not responsible for others. I have my own life to make or mar, and never to win Miss Bodine would mar it wofully. I am an educated man and her equal socially, although she is greatly my superior in other respects. I have the means with which to support her in affluence. I mean only good toward her and you. This is neither selfishness nor recklessness."

"Have you spoken to Mr. Houghton of your intentions?"

"Not yet, but I shall."

"You will find him as bitterly opposed to it all as I am."

"I think not. I shall be sorry beyond measure if you are right, but it can make no difference."

"You will defy him also, then?"

"I object to the use of that word, Captain Bodine. In availing myself of my inalienable rights I defy no one."

"Have I no rights in my own child? Your purpose is to rob me as ruthlessly as our homes were desolated years since."

"I am not responsible for the past, any more than I am for your prejudices against me. My purpose is simple and honorable, as much so as that of any other man who may ask you for your daughter's hand."

"Mr. Houghton," said Bodine, rising, "there is no use in prolonging this painful and intensely disagreeable interview. I said to your father in this office that our relations could be only those of business. Even these shall soon cease. I now understand you, sir. Of course the past is nothing to you, and you are bent on obtaining what you imagine you wish at the present moment, without any regard to others. Let me tell you once for all there can be no alliance between your house and mine. I would as soon bury my daughter as see her married to you. I do find fault with you personally. You are headlong and inconsiderate. You would lay your hands on the best you can find in the South just as your armies and politicians have done. But you proceed further at your peril—do you comprehend me?—at your peril," and the veteran's eyes gleamed fiercely.

"Captain Bodine," said George, also rising, "you cannot make me lose my temper. I shall give you no just reason for saying that I am headlong. I wish you could be more calm and fair yourself. Before we part one point must be settled. My request must be met in one way or the other. If you will give me your word that you will repeat the purport of what I have said to Miss Bodine, I will make no effort to do so myself. However hostile you may be to me, I know that you are a man of honor, and I will trust you. I merely wish Miss Bodine to know that I love her and am willing to wait for her till I am gray."

"You wish me to tell her that you will wait and pray for my death, and seek to lead her to do likewise," was the angry reply.

"It is useless for me to protest against your unjust and bitter words. The trust that I offer to repose in you entitles me to better courtesy."

By a great effort Bodine regained self-control, and balanced himself for a few moments on his crutches in deep thought. At last he said, "I accept the trust, and will be as fair to you as it is possible for an outraged father to be. I forbid that you should have any communication with my daughter whatever, and I shall forbid her to receive any from you. What is more, you must take her answer as final."

"I promise only this, Captain Bodine, that I shall take no action without your knowledge. I shall trust you implicitly in repeating the purport of this interview. The moment that I looked into your face I recognized that you were a gentleman, and I again apologize for my rude remark before I knew who you were. Good-evening, sir."

Bodine bowed stiffly, and departed with many conflicting emotions surging in his breast, none of them agreeable. He scarcely knew whether he had acted wisely or not. Indeed, the impression grew upon him that he had been worsted in the encounter, that George, in making him his messenger to Ella, had acted with singular astuteness. This was true, but the young man's action was not the result of the Yankee shrewdness with which the veteran was disposed to credit him. A simple, straightforward course is usually the wisest one, and George instinctively knew that Ella would appreciate such openness on his part. He was left in a very anxious and perturbed condition, it is true, but in his heart he again thanked Mrs. Willoughby for putting him so sacredly on his guard against his hasty temper.

Absorbed in thought, he sat till the gloom of night gathered in the office; then the shuffling feet of the impatient janitor aroused him.

Solacing the old man with a dollar, he went out hastily, and walked a mile or two to work off his nervous excitement, then sought a restaurant, muttering, "I haven't reached the point of losing my appetite yet."

By the time Bodine reached home he was much calmer, and disposed to take a much more hopeful view of the affair.

He again concluded that after all it was best that he should be the one to inform Ella, and thus keep the matter entirely within his own hands. Believing her to be as yet untouched by anything that Houghton might have said to her, he felt quite sure that he could readily induce her to take the same attitude toward the objectionable suitor which he proposed to maintain to the end.

He found her and his cousin very anxious about his late return—an anxiety not allayed by his grim, stern expression.

"I have been detained by an unpleasant interview," he said.

"With that old—"

"No, not with Mr. Houghton. I will explain after dinner."

With the swiftness of light, Ella surmised the truth, and made but a very indifferent repast. Her father noted this, and asked himself, "Could she have known of his purpose?" Then he reproached himself inwardly for entertaining the thought.

The meal was comparatively a silent one, and soon over; then they all went to Mrs. Bodine's room.

"I wish you to be present, Cousin Sophy," said the captain, "for I have a very disagreeable task to perform, and I can scarcely trust myself to do it fairly. You must prompt me if you think I do not. Ella, my dear and only child, I trust that you will receive the message, which, in a sense, I have been compelled to bring you, in the right spirit. I feel sure that you will do so, and that your course now and hereafter will continue to give me that same deep, glad peace at heart which your fidelity to duty and your devotion to me have always inspired. You have my happiness now in your hands as never before; but I do not fear that you will fail me. The son of the man whom we all detest, and whose employ I shall leave presently, has asked permission to pay you his addresses."

She turned pale as he spoke so gravely, and trembled visibly.

"Why do you tell me this, papa?" she faltered. "I would rather not have known it."

"Because he requested me to tell you. Because he said he wished you to know that he loved you, and that if I did not tell you he would himself;" and he looked at her keenly.

"Then," cried Ella, impetuously, "although I may never speak to him again, I say he has acted honorably. I told you that he was incapable of anything clandestine."

"I trust that you never will speak to him again," said her father, almost sternly. "I have forbidden him to have any communication with you, and I certainly forbid your speaking with him again."

"Father," said Ella, gently, with tears in her eyes, "I do not deserve that you should speak to me in that tone. I've always tried to obey you."

"Forgive me, Ella, but I have been intensely annoyed by the interview inflicted upon me, and I cannot think of it, or of his preposterous course, with patience. Moreover, pardon me for saying it, you have shown a friendly interest in him which it has been very painful to note."

"I've only tried to be fair to him, papa."

"Please try merely to forget him, Ella—to think nothing about him whatever."

"I shall try to obey you, papa; but you are too old and wise to tell me not to think. As well tell me not to breathe."

"Ella," began her father sternly, "can you mean—"

"Now, Hugh," interrupted his cousin, "be careful you don't do more mischief than young Houghton can possibly accomplish. How men do bungle in these matters! Houghton hasn't bungled, though. His making you his messenger strikes me as the shrewdest Yankee trick I ever heard of."

"I had the same impression on my way home," admitted Bodine, irritably.

Ella felt that she owed no such deference to Mrs. Bodine as she did to her father, and, with an ominous flash in her eyes, said decidedly, "You are bungling, Cousin Sophy.

George Houghton is incapable of what you term a Yankee trick. I will be pliant under all motives of love and duty to my father, but you must not outrage my sense of justice. You must remember that I have a conscience, as truly as you have."

"There, forgive me, Ella. You've seen the young fellow, and I haven't. Cousin Hugh, remember that Ella has your spirit, and the spirit of her ancestors. Show her what is right and best, and she will do it."

Bodine looked at his daughter in deep perturbation. Could that flushed, beautiful woman be his little Ella? With an indescribable pang he began to recognize that she was becoming a woman, with an independent life of her own. The greatness of the emergency calmed him, as all strong minds are quieted by great and impending danger. "Ella," he said, gently and sadly, "I do not wish to treat you as a little, foolish girl, but as becomes your years. I wish your conscience and reason to go with mine. You know that your happiness is the chief desire of my life. There could be no happiness for either of us in such a misalliance. The father of this hasty youth will be as bitterly opposed to it all as I am. We belong to different camps, and can never have anything in common. You know my motive in taking employment from him. I have thought better of it, and shall now leave his office as soon as I can honorably. I don't wish to outrage your sense of justice, Ella, and I will mention one other essential point in the interview. I told young Houghton that he must accept your answer as final, and that he would proceed further at his peril, and he said he would only take a final answer from you after years of patient waiting and wooing. How he proposes to do the latter I do not know, nor does he know himself. He did say, however, that he would take no action without my knowledge. You see that I am trying to be just to him."

"I would like to ask one question, papa. Did he use any angry, disrespectful language toward you?"

Bodine winced under this question, but said plainly, "No, he did not. He apologized for the third time for a hasty remark he once made before he knew who I was. He said that he recognized that I was a gentleman then, and that he would trust me as such to deliver his message."

The girl drew a long breath as if a deep cause for anxiety had been removed.

"Oh, come now, Cousin Hugh, you and Ella are taking this matter too much to heart. Why, Lor bless you! I had nearly a dozen offers by the time I was Ella's age. There is nothing tragic about this young fellow or his proceedings. Indeed, I think with Ella, that he has done remarkably well, wonderfully well, considering. Nine out of ten of his kind wouldn't be so scrupulous. He has done neither you nor Ella any wrong, only paid you the highest compliment in his power. Regard it as such, and let the matter end there. He can't marry Ella out of hand any more than he can me."

At this the girl, seeing inevitably the comic side of everything, burst into a laugh. "Cousin Sophy," she cried, "you surpass Solomon himself. Come, dear papa, let us try to be sensible. Of course Mr. Houghton can't marry me without your consent or mine."

"Then I may tell him that you will never give your consent—that what he terms his suit must end at once and forever?"

She again became very pale, and did not answer immediately.

"Ella, my only child, the hope and solace of my life, can you hesitate?"

With a rush of tears, she threw herself upon his neck, and sobbed, "Tell him that I will never do anything without your consent." Then she fled to her own room.

The captain and Mrs. Bodine sat looking at each other in consternation.

CHAPTER XXX

TEMPESTS

ON his return home George found his father reading such of the Boston papers as most nearly reflected his own views, and in which he had lost none of his early interest. He had always looked upon himself somewhat in the light of an exile, and it had been his purpose to return to his native State; but as time passed, a dread of its harsh climate had begun to reconcile him to the thought of ending his days in Charleston. All morbid tendencies strengthen, if indulged. The desire, therefore, to remain near the watery grave of his eldest son increased. Allied to this motive was the pleasure of accumulating money, the excitement of business, and exultation over the fact that he was taking tens of thousands from his enemies. As far as possible he invested his capital at the North. The people among whom he dwelt knew this, knew that, unlike Mr. Ainsley, he was doing as little as possible to build up the section from which he was drawing his wealth.

George, as yet, had not been inducted into the spirit or knowledge of his father's business methods, for the old man had believed that the time for this had not come. Moreover, as the merchant became better acquainted with the maturer character of his son, he became convinced that George would not, indeed could not, carry on the business as he had. There was a large, tolerant good-nature about the youth which would render it impossible for him to deal with any one in his father's spirit. He had not known his elder brother, and was merely proud of his record as that of a brave soldier who had died in the performance of duty.

George was like many of the combatants, both Union and Confederate, capable of fighting each other to the death during the war, but ready to shake hands after the battle was over.

No one understood this disposition better than Mr. Houghton, and he felt that the South was no place for George. He wished his son to go back to Massachusetts, where wealth and influence would open the way for a brilliant career; and the old man already saw in imagination his name famous in the Old Commonwealth.

He had been thinking over this scheme on the present evening, and his mind was full of it when George entered. "Glad to see you so early," he said genially. "Had a good dinner? Yes; well, then, sit down a while, for I wish to talk to you. I've had a good nap, and so won't need to go to bed very early. Well, my boy, you've reached that age when you should take your bearings for your future career."

"Why, father, I've always expected to go into business with you, and gradually relieve you of its burdens and cares."

"No, George, that wouldn't be best; that wouldn't suit me at all. You are fitted for something better and larger. You wouldn't carry on the business as I do, and that would lead to differences between us. I couldn't stand that. The iron entered into my soul before you were born. Your brother had equal promise with yourself, and, to put it very mildly, I have no love for those who destroyed him. I do business with them, but in much the same spirit that Antonio dealt with the Jew on the Rialto. You would not do this, nor could I expect you to. The accursed crime of rebellion has not smitten your soul as with lightning, nor broken your heart. The young fall into the ways of those with whom they live, and I wish you to have as little to do with this Southern people as possible. There is no career for you in this city, but in your native State you can become almost what you please. If, for instance, with your splendid health you entered upor the study of law and mastered it, I have influence and wealth enough to advance

you rapidly, until by your own grip you can climb to the top of the ladder. You can then eventually marry into one of the best families in the State, and thus at the same time secure happiness and double your chances of success."

George listened aghast as his father proceeded complacently, and with a touch of enthusiasm rarely indulged. He was sitting by an open window, at some distance from Mr. Houghton, the darkness concealing his face. He now began to realize the truth of Mrs. Willoughby's belief and Bodine's conviction, that he might find as much trouble at home as elsewhere. It quickly became clear to him that he must reveal the truth at once, but how to set about it he scarcely knew, and he hesitated like one on the brink of icy water. What he considered a bright thought struck him, and he said, "Speaking of marrying, you never told me how you came to marry mother."

"Oh!" replied the old man dreamily, "I was almost brought up to marry her. She was the daughter of a near neighbor and dear friend of my father's. Your mother and I played together as children. I scarcely think we knew when our mutual affection changed into love—it all came about so gradually and naturally—and the union gave the deepest satisfaction to both families. Ah! George, George, your brother's death shortened the life of your mother, and left me very sad and lonely. I can never forgive this people for the irreparable injuries they have done to me and mine. I know you cannot feel as I do; but love of country and your affection for me should lead you to stand aloof from those who are still animated by the old, diabolical spirit which caused the death of such brave fellows as your brother, and broke the hearts of such women as your mother."

His son's distress was so deep that he buried his face in his hands.

"I don't wonder that your feelings are touched by my reminiscences, George," and the old man wiped tears from his own eyes.

"Oh, father!" cried the son, springing up, and placing his hand on the old man's shoulder, "I'm going to test your love for me severely. You are right in saying I cannot feel as you do. I did not know that you felt so strongly. I've given my love to a Southern girl."

Moments of oppressive silence followed this announcement, and the old man's face grew stern and rigid.

"Father, listen patiently," George began. "She is not to blame for the past, nor am I. If you only knew how good and noble and lovely she is—"

"Who is she? What is her name?"

"Ella Bodine."

"What! A relative of that double-dyed rebel in my office?"

"His daughter."

"George Houghton!" and his father sprang up, and confronted his son with a visage distorted by anger. Never had the youth called forth a look like that, and he trembled before the passion he had evoked.

"Father," he said entreatingly, "sit down. Do not look at me so, do not speak to me till you are calm. Remember I am your son."

The old man paced the room for a few moments in strong agitation, for he had been wounded at his most vulnerable point. The thought that his only son would ally himself with those whom he so detested, and whom for years he had sought to punish, almost maddened him. As we have seen before, there was a slumbering volcano in this old man's breast when adequate causes called it into action, and now the deepest and strongest forces of his nature were awakened.

At last he said in a constrained voice: "I hope you also will remember that I am your father. It would appear that you had forgotten the fact, when you made love to one whom I never can call daughter."

"I have not made love to her yet. You—"

"Has she been making love to you then?"

"Father, please don't speak in that way. There never were harsh words between us before, and there must not be now."

Again the dreadful silence fell between them, but it was evident that Mr. Houghton was making a great effort for self-control.

"You are right, George," he said at last. "I have never spoken to you before as I have to-night, and, I hope to God, I may never have cause to do so again. I have not been a harsh father, nor have I inflicted my unhappiness on you. I have given you large liberty, the best education that you would take, and ample means with which to enjoy yourself. I had expected that in return you would consult my wishes in some vital matters—as vital to your happiness as mine. I never dreamed that such incredible folly as you have mentioned was possible. Your very birthright precluded the idea. You said that you would have to test my love severely. I shall not only have to test your love, but also your reason, your common-sense, almost your sanity. What is thought of a man who throws away everything for a pretty face?"

"That I shall never do, father. The beauty in Ella Bodine's face is but the reflex of her character."

"That's what every enamored fool has said from the beginning of time," replied Mr. Houghton, in strong irritation. "What chance have you had to learn her character? I know more about the girl and her connections than you do. She works with that Wallingford girl, and that old fire-eater, Mrs. Hunter, in the baking trade. She lives with her cousin old Mrs. Bodine, who thinks of little else than what she is pleased to consider her blue blood, forgetting that it is not good, loyal, American blood. This little patch of a State is more to her than the Union bequeathed to us by our fathers. As to Bodine himself, if the South rose again, he'd march away on his crutches with the rebellious army. Can you soberly expect to live among such a set of people? Can you expect me to fraternize with them, to stultify all

my life, to trample on my most sacred convictions, to be disloyal to the memory of wife and son, who virtually perished by the action of just such traitors?" and he laughed in harsh, bitter protest.

George sat down, again buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

"You may well groan, young man, when you face the truth which you have so strangely forgotten. But come, I'm not one to yield weakly to any such monstrous absurdity. You are young and strong, and should have a spirit equal to your stature and muscle. You have not made love to this girl, you say. Never do it. Steer as wide of her as you would of a whirlpool, and all will soon be well. I won't believe that a son of mine can be so wretchedly, miserably, and contemptibly weak as to throw himself away in this fashion."

George was silent and overwhelmed. His father's words had opened an abyss at his feet. He loved the old man tenderly and gratefully, and, under his burning, scathing words, felt at the time that his course was black ingratitude. Even if he could face the awful estrangement which he saw must ensue, the thought of striking such a blow at his father's hopes, affection and confidence made him shudder in his very soul. It might be fatal even to a life already held in the feeble grasp of age. He could not speak.

At last Mr. Houghton resumed, very gravely, and yet not unkindly: "You are not the first one of your age who has been on the verge of an irreparable blunder. Thank God it is not too late for you to retreat! Do not let this word jar upon you, for it often requires much higher courage and manhood to retreat than to advance. To do the latter in this case would be as foolhardy as it would be wrong and disastrous to all concerned. It would be as fatal to me as to you, for I could not long survive if I learned that I had been leaning on such a broken reed. It would be fatal to you, for I would not leave my money so you could enrich these people. You would have nothing in the

world but the pretty face for which you sold your birthright. I will say no more now, George. You will wake in the morning a sane man, and my son. Good-night."

"Good-night, father," George answered in a broken voice. Then, when alone, he added bitterly: "Wake! When shall I sleep again?"

The eastern horizon was tinged with light before, exhausted by his fierce mental conflict, he sank into a respite of oblivion. For a long time he wavered, love for his father tugging at his heart with a restraining power far beyond that of words which virtually were threats. "He could keep his money," the young fellow groaned, "if I could only keep his affection and confidence, if I could only be sure that I would not harm his life and health. I could be happy in working as a day-laborer for her."

At last he came to a decision. He had given both his love and his word to Ella. She only could reject the one, and absolve him from the other.

He was troubled to find that the forenoon had nearly passed when he awoke. Dressing hastily, he went down to make inquiries for his father.

"Marse Houghton went to de sto' at de us'l time," said the colored waiter. "He lef word not to 'sturb you, an' ter hab you'se breakfus' ready."

George merely swallowed a cup of coffee, and then hastened down town. Meanwhile, events had occurred at the office which require attention.

A very few moments after Mr. Houghton entered his private room he touched a bell. To the clerk who entered he said, "Take this letter to Mr. Bodine."

The veteran's face was as rigid and stern with his purpose as the employer was grim in his resolves; but when the captain read the curt note handed to him, his face grew dark with passion. It ran as follows:

"MR. BODINE—I have no further need of your services. Inclosed find check for your wages to the end of the month."

The captain sat still a few moments to regain self-control then quietly put his desk in order. He next halted to the private office, and the two men looked steadily and unblenchingly into each other's eyes for a moment. Then the Southerner began sternly, "That hair-brained son of yours has told you of the interview he forced upon me last night."

"This is my private office, sir," replied Mr. Houghton, with equal sternness. "You have no right to enter it, or to use such language."

"Yes, sir, I have the right. Were it not for the folly and presumption of your headlong boy, I would have left your employ quietly in a few days, and had nothing more to do with you or yours. To save my daughter annoyance from his silly sentimentality I was compelled to come into this hated place wherein you concoct your schemes to suck dry our Southern blood. He asked for permission to pay his addresses to my daughter, and I forbade it. I told him that he could only do so at his peril."

"You are certainly right, sir. I also have told him that he would do so at his peril."

"I also told him that I would rather bury my daughter than see her married to him."

"Truly, sir, I never imagined we could agree so perfectly on any question," was Mr. Houghton's sarcastic reply. "Can we not now part with this clear understanding? I have much to attend to this morning."

"I have but one word more, and then trust I am through with his sentimentality and your insolence. Tell the boy that my daughter says she will have nothing to do with him without my consent. Now if there is even the trace of a gentleman in his anatomy he will leave us alone. Good-morning, sir." And tearing the check in two, he dropped it on the floor and halted away.

Mr. Houghton coolly and contemptuously turned to his writing till the door closed on Bodine, and then he smiled and rubbed his hands in self-felicitation. "This is better than I had hoped," he said. "I've often laughed at the

idiotic pride of these black-blooded, rather than blue-blooded, fire-eaters, but I shall bless it hereafter."

"As you virtually say, you hardened old rebel, if George is worth the powder to blow him up, he'll drop you all now as if you had the plague. I've only to tell him what you and your doll-daughter have said."

CHAPTER XXXI

"I ABSOLVE YOU"

WHEN George reached the counting-rooms, he saw that Bodine was not in his accustomed place. Surmising the truth at once, he hastened to his father's room, and asked almost sternly:

"Where is Captain Bodine?"

"I neither know nor care," was the cool reply. "He is dismissed from my service."

"You have acted unjustly, sir," his son began hotly, "you have punished him for my—"

"George," interrupted his father gravely, "remember what you said about angry words between us."

The young man paced the office excitedly for a few moments in silence and then sat down.

"That's right," resumed his father quietly. "I am glad you are able to attain self-control, for you now require the full possession of all your faculties. Fortunately for both of us, this man, Bodine, has said more than enough to end this folly forever," and he began to repeat the conversation which had taken place.

At a certain point George started, and, looking at his father with a shocked expression, asked, "Did you mean, sir, that you also would rather see me buried than married to a good woman whom I love?"

"That is your way of putting it," replied Mr. Houghton, somewhat disconcerted, for his son's tone and look smote him sorely. "You will understand my feelings better when you have heard that rebel's final words;" and he

repeated them, ending with the sentences, "'Tell the boy that my daughter says she will have nothing to do with him without my consent. Now if there is even the trace of a gentleman in his anatomy he will leave us alone.' In this final remark I certainly do agree with him most emphatically," concluded the old man sternly. "Any human being, possessing a particle of self-respect, would prefer death to the humiliation and dishonor of seeking to force himself on such people."

"I suppose you are right, sir, but I cannot help having my own thoughts."

"Well, what are they?"

"That the girl has met in her home the same harsh, terrible opposition that I have found in mine."

"Undoubtedly, thank heaven! Whether she needed it or not she has evidently had the sense to take the wholesome medicine. The probabilities are, however, that she has laughed at the idea of receiving attentions so repugnant to her father and to me."

"No doubt," said George wearily. "Very well, there *is* a trace of a gentleman in my anatomy. I would like to leave town for a while."

"A very sensible wish, George," said his father kindly. "Go where you please, and take all the money you need. When you have come to see this affair in its true light come back to me. I will try to arrange my business so that we can make a visit North together in the early autumn."

"Very well, sir," and there was apathy in his tones. After a moment he added, "Please give me some work this morning."

"No, my boy. Go and make your preparations at once. Divert your thoughts into new channels. Be a resolute man for a few days, and then your own manhood will right you as a boat is righted when keeled over by a sudden gust."

George was not long in forming the same plan which Clancy had adopted. He would go to the mountains in

the interior, fish, hunt and tramp till the fever in his blood subsided. He told his father of his purpose.

"All right, George. I only wish I were young and strong enough to go with you. It will not be long before you will see that I have had at heart only what was best for you."

"I hope so, father; I truly do, for I have had a new, strange experience. Even yet I can scarcely comprehend that you and Mr. Bodine could speak to your children, and dictate to them in matters relating to their happiness as you both have done. It savors more of feudal times than of this free age."

"In all times, George, the hasty passions and inconsiderate desires of the young, when permitted gratification, have led to a lifetime of wretchedness. But we need not refer to this matter again. Bodine's final words have settled it for all time."

"It would certainly seem so," said young Houghton. "Well, I will make my preparations to start to-morrow."

His first step was to go direct to Mrs. Willoughby, and his dejected expression revealed to the lady that her anticipations of strong opposition were correct.

"I won't annoy you," she said, as George sat down and looked at her with troubled eyes, "by that saying of complacently sagacious people, 'I told you so.' You may tell me all if you wish."

"I do so wish, for I fear my way is blocked." And he related all that had occurred. When he ended with Bodine's final words she said thoughtfully, "Such language as that, combined with Ella's message, does seem to end the affair."

"Well, I know this much," he replied ruefully, "I *am* a gentleman. No matter what it costs me I must continue to be one."

"Yes, Mr. Houghton, you have acted like a gentleman, and, as you say, you must continue to do so. Let me congratulate and thank you for keeping your temper."

"I nearly lost it when I learned that my father had discharged Mr. Bodine."

"I understand how you felt then. You were sorely tried as I feared. Have you any reason to think that Ella feels in any such way as you do?"

"None at all. My best hope was, that with time and opportunity I could awaken like regard. While not at all sanguine, I would have made every effort in my power to win her respect and love. But now what can I do? If I take another step I must forfeit my father's love and confidence, which is far more to me than his money. I have at least brain and muscle enough to earn a living for us both. I fear, however, that such a course would kill the old gentleman. I could meet this problem by simply waiting if Ella cared for me, but she and her father have made it impossible to approach her again. She has said she would have nothing to do with me without her father's consent, and he has said that he would rather bury her than permit my attentions."

"Well, my friend, I see how it is, and I absolve you utterly. You can't go forward under the circumstances."

"No, for she would now probably meet any effort on my part with contempt, and agree with her father that a Northern man couldn't even appreciate words that were like a kick."

"Well, then, go to the mountains and forget all about it. If Ella had set her heart upon you as you have on her, and you both could be patiently constant, the future might have possibilities; but if I were a man I would make no further effort under the circumstances."

George went home with a heavy heart, and grimly entered upon the first hard battle of his life.

Ella tried to be her old mirthful self when she came down to breakfast that morning, and succeeded fairly well. In spite of her father's bitter words and opposition he had told her a truth that was like the sun in the sky. George Houghton loved her, and he had revealed his love in no

underhand way. She was proud of him; she exulted over him, and, in the delicious pain of her own awakening heart, she forgot nearly everything except the fact that he loved her.

Bodine was perplexed by her manner and not wholly reassured. When she had kissed him good-by for the day, he said, "Cousin Sophy, perhaps our fears last night had little foundation. Ella does not seem cast down this morning."

The old lady shook her head and only remarked, "I hope it is not as serious as I feared."

"Why do you fear so greatly?"

"Suppose Ella does care for him more than we could wish, the fact you told her last night that this young fellow loves her, or thinks he does, would be very exhilarating. Oh, I know a woman's heart. We're all alike."

"Curse him!" muttered the captain.

"No, no, no, pray for your enemies. That's commanded, but not that we should marry our daughters to them. Dear Cousin Hugh, we must keep our comon-sense in this matter. This is probably Ella's first little love affair, and girls as well as boys often have two or three before they settle down. Ella will soon get over it, if we ignore the whole affair as far as possible. You have much to be thankful for, since neither of the young people is sly and underhanded. Never fear. That old Houghton will set his boy down more decidedly than you have Ella, and also send him out of town probably. This cloud will sink below the horizon before we are many months older. Perhaps Ella will mope a little for a time, but we must not notice it, and *must* make it as cheerful for her as possible. Charleston men are beginning to call on her, and she'll soon discover that there are others in the world besides George Houghton."

But the veteran halted to his work sore-hearted and angry. Strong-willed and decided as Mr. Houghton himself, he could not endure the truth that his daughter had

looked with favor on one so intensely disagreeable to him. He, too, felt that such an alliance would stultify his life and all his past, that it would bring him into contempt with those whose respect he most valued. Young Houghton's coolness and resolute purpose to ignore his opposition, together with the fact that Ella was not indifferent, troubled him, and led to the determination to take the strongest measures within his power to prevent further complications. This resolve accounted for his visit to Mr. Houghton's office and the words he uttered there. His employer, however, had aroused his anger to the last degree, and he returned home in a rage.

Mrs. Bodine listened quietly to his recital of what had occurred, and then said, with her irrepressible little laugh, "Well, it was Greek meeting Greek. You both fired regular broadsiders. Cool off, Cousin Hugh. Don't you see that all things are working for the best? Your rupture with old Houghton will only secure you greater favor with our people, and Ella be cured all the sooner of any weakness toward that old curmudgeon's son."

"I should hope so," said her father most emphatically.

"Don't you be harsh to Ella. We can laugh her out of this fancy much better than scold or threaten her out of it."

"I shall not do either," said Bodine gravely. "I shall tell her the facts and then trust to her love, loyalty and good sense. It has been no laughing matter to me."

Ella's cheerfulness and happiness grew apace all the morning. "To think that I should have brought that great Vandal to my feet so soon!" she thought, smiling to herself. "Dear me! Why can't people let bygones be bygones? Now if I could see him, naturally what a chase I could lead him! If he thinks I'll put my two hands together and say, 'Please, sir, don't exert yourself. The weather is too warm for that. Behold thine handmaid,' he will be so mistaken that he will make some poor dinners. I'd be bound to keep him sighing like a furnace for a time. Well, well, I fear we both will have to do a lot of

sighing, but time and patience see many changes. As Aun' Sheba says, he's on ''bation,' and, if he holds out, our stern fathers may eventually see that the best way to be happy themselves is to make us happy. He thinks I'm a very frigid representative of the Southern people. Wouldn't he dance a jig if he knew? Well, speed thee on, old Father Time, and touch softly obdurate hearts." Thus with the hopefulness of youth she looked forward.

Mara regarded her with misgivings, but asked no questions. She also was sadly preoccupied with her own thoughts.

"Aun' Sheba," Ella said, as the old woman entered, "I rather like this ''bation' scheme of yours. I think of putting myself on ''bation.'"

"Oh, you go long, honey. Doan you make light ob serus tings."

"I'm doing nothing of the kind, Aun' Sheba. I've too much respect for you."

"Oh, well, honey, sich as you gits 'ligion jes as you did de measles. It's kin ob bawn an' baptize inter yez wen you doan know it. But I'se got to hab a po'ful conwiction ob sin fust, an' dats de trouble wid me. I says to myself, 'Aun' Sheba, you'se a wile sinner. Why doan you cry an' groan, an' hab a big conwiction? Den you feel mo' shuah;' but de conwiction won' come no how. Sted ob groanin' I gits sleepy."

"Well, I think I've got a conviction, Aun' Sheba, and I'm not a bit sleepy."

"I don't know what you dribin at. Bettah be keerful how you talk, honey."

"I think so too, Ella."

"Oh, Mara! you take such 'lugubrious' views, as I heard some one say. There, Aun' Sheba! I'll sober down some day."

CHAPTER XXXII

FALSE SELF-SACRIFICE

ELLA was very much surprised to find her father reading in the parlor when she returned home. "Why papa!" she cried, with misgivings of trouble, "are you not well?"

"I cannot say that I am, Ella, but my pain is mental rather than physical. Mr. Houghton dismissed me with insults from his service this morning."

Ella flushed scarlet. "Where was young Mr. Houghton?" she asked indignantly.

"Sent to Coventry, probably. He evidently did not dare put in an appearance."

She sat down and drew a long breath.

"Ella," said her father very gravely, "I shall not treat you as a child. You have compelled me to recognize that you are no longer the little girl that had grown so gradually and lovingly at my side."

"Papa," cried Ella, "I am not less lovingly at your side to-day."

"I hope so. I shall believe it if, with the spirit which becomes your birth, you do take your place at my side in unrelenting hostility to these Houghtons who have heaped insult upon us, the son by rash, headlong action which he would soon regret, and the father by insufferable insolence. But you shall judge for yourself." And he began, as Mr. Houghton had done, to repeat what had passed between them.

At the same terrible words which had smitten George, she also cried, "Papa, did you say you would rather bury me?"

"Yes," said the veteran sternly, "and I would rather be buried myself. You must remember that I am at heart a soldier and not a trader. I could not survive dishonor to you or myself; and any relation except that of enmity to these Houghtons would humiliate me into the very mire. What's more, Mr. Houghton feels in the same way about his son. I am not one whit more averse than he is. He virtually said that he would disinherit and cast out his son should he continue to offend by seeking your hand. I, in return, told him that if the sentimental boy had even the trace of a gentleman in his anatomy he would leave us alone. Now you can measure the gravity of the situation. The name of our ancestors, the sacred cause for which I and so many that I loved perilled and lost life, forbid that I should take any other course. Turn from this folly and all will be serene and happy soon. I can obtain a position elsewhere. Surely, Ella, you are too true a Southern girl to have given your heart unsought, unasked to your knowledge till last night. Your very pride should rescue you from such a slough as this."

The girl had turned pale and red as he spoke. Now she rose and said falteringly: "Papa, I'm no hypocrite. As I told you last night, I will do nothing whatever without your consent."

"You will never have my consent even to speak to that fellow."

"Very well then," she said quietly, "that ends it."

So apparently it did. Ella went to her room and for a few moments indulged in a passion of grief. "Oh, to think," she moaned, "that fathers can say to their children that they would rather bury them than give up the bitterness of an old and useless enmity! It is indeed all ended, for *he* would never look at me again after papa's words." In a few moments she added, "Mine also, mine also, for I

said, 'Tell him I will do nothing without papa's consent.' Well, I only hope he can get over it easier than I can."

She soon washed the traces of tears from her eyes and muttered: "I won't show the white feather anyhow, even if I haven't Aun's Sheba's comfort of being on "bation.' " And she marched down to dinner with the feeling of a soldier who has a campaign rather than a single battle before him.

There was a little stiffness at first; but Mrs. Bodine, with her fine tact, soon began to banish this, and the old lady was pleased that Ella seconded her efforts so readily. Bodine was a man and a straightforward soldier, honest in his views and actions, however mistaken they might be. He had not feminine quickness in outward self-recovery, and the waves of his strong feeling could only subside gradually. He soon began to congratulate himself, however, that his strong measures had led to a most fortunate escape, and he admitted the truth of his cousin's words that young girls were subject to sudden attacks of romantic sentiment before they were fairly launched into society.

As the days passed these impressions were strengthened, for Ella appeared merrier than ever before. Mrs. Bodine kept pace with her nonsense which at times even verged on audacity, and the veteran began to laugh as he had done before the "Houghton episode," as he now characterized it in his mind. Mrs. Bodine, however, began to observe little things in Ella which troubled her.

On the morning following that of Bodine's dismissal, Mara saw at once from Ella's expression that something unpleasant had occurred.

"What has happened?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, we've had an earthquake at our house," was the somewhat bitter reply. Fondly as she loved Mara, Ella stood in no awe of her whatever, and her heart was almost bursting from the strong repression into which she knew she must school herself for the sake of her father.

"Please, Ella, don't talk riddles."

"Well, papa and old Houghton have had a regular pitched battle; papa has been discharged, and is now a gentleman of leisure."

"Shameful! What earthly reason could that old wretch—"

"I'm the earthly reason."

"Ella, don't tantalize me."

"Well, that misguided little boy, who must stand six feet in his stockings, had the preposterous presumption—there's alliteration for you, but nothing else is equal to the case—to ask papa if he might pay his addresses to me. Isn't that the conventional phrase? At the bare thought both of our papas went off like heavy columbiads, and we poor little children have been blown into space."

"Oh, Ella! how can you speak so!" cried Mara indignantly. "The idea of associating your father with that man Houghton in your thoughts! It does indeed seem that no one can have anything to do with such Yankees as come to this city—"

"There now, Mara," said Ella a little irritably, "I haven't Aun' Sheba's grace of self-depreciation. I haven't been conjured into a monster by Northern associations, and I haven't lost my common-sense. I don't associate papa with old Houghton, as no one should know better than you. No daughter ever loved father more than I love papa. What's more, I've given him a proof of it, which few daughters are called upon to give. But I'm not a fool. The same faculties which enable me to know that you are Mara Wallingford reveal to me with equal clearness that papa and Mr. Houghton have acted in much the same way."

"Could you imagine for a *moment* that your father would permit the attentions of that young Houghton?"

"Certainly I could imagine it. If papa had come to me and said, 'Ella, I have learned beyond doubt that Mr. Houghton is sly, mean, unscrupulous, or dissipated,' I should have dropped him as I would a hot poker. Instead of all this the Vandal goes to papa like a gentleman, tells

him the truth, intrusts him with the message of his regard for me, and promises that if papa will tell me he will not—also promises that he will not make the slightest effort to win my favor without papa's knowledge. Then he told his own father about his designs upon the little baker. Then both of our loving papas said in chorus of us silly children, 'We'll see 'em buried first.' "

"I don't wonder your father said so," Mara remarked sternly.

"Well, *I* wonder, and I can't understand it," cried Ella, bursting into a passion of tears.

"There now, Ella," Mara began soothingly, "you will see all in the true light when you have had time to think it over. Remember how old Houghton is looked upon in this city. Consider his intense hostility to us."

"I've nothing to say for him," sobbed Ella.

"Well, it would be said that your father had permitted you to marry the son of this rich old extortioner for the sake of his money. Your action would throw discredit on all your father's life and devotion to a cause—"

"Which is dead as Julius Cæsar," Ella interrupted.

"But which is as sacred to us," continued Mara very gravely, "as the memory of our loved and honored dead."

"I don't believe our loved and honored dead would wish useless unhappiness to continue indefinitely. What earthly good can ever result from this cherished bitterness and enmity? Oh, mamma, mamma! I wish you had lived, for you would have understood the love which forgives and heals the wounds of the past."

"Ella, can you have given your love to this alien and almost stranger?"

"I have at least given him my respect and admiration," she repiled, rising and wiping her eyes before resuming her work. Suddenly she paused, and in a serio-comic attitude she pointed with the roller as she said, "Mara, suppose you insisted that that kitchen table was a cathedral, would it be a cathedral to me? No more so than that your indiscrimi-

nate prejudices against Northern people are grand, heroic, or based on truth. So there, now. I've got to unburden my feelings somewhere; although I expect sympathy from no one, I believe in the angels' song of 'Peace on earth and good will toward men.' "

"I fear your good will toward one man," said Mara, very sadly, "is taking you out of sympathy with those who love you, and who have the best and most natural right to your love."

"See how mistaken you are! I shall never be out of sympathy with you, papa, or Cousin Sophy. But how can I sympathize with some of your views when God has given me a nature that revolts at them? If you ever love a good man, God and your own heart will teach you what a sacred thing it is. What if I am poor, and lacking in graces and accomplishments, I know I have an honest, loving nature. Think of that old man Houghton condemning and threatening his son, as if he had committed a vile crime in his most honorable intentions toward me! Well, well, it's all over. I've given my word to papa that I'll do nothing without his consent, and he'll see me buried before he'll give it. Don't you worry, I'm not going to pine and live on moonshine. I'll prove that I'm a Bodine in my own way."

"Yes, Ella, you will, and eventually it will be in the right way."

"Mara, what I have said is in confidence, and since I've had my say I'd rather not talk about it any more."

Mara was glad enough to drop the subject, for Ella had been saying things to which her own heart echoed most uncomfortably. She and Mrs. Hunter accepted Mrs. Bodine's invitation to dine that evening, and, in her sympathy for Bodine, was kinder to him than ever, thus reviving his hopes and deepening his feelings.

Time passed, bringing changes scarcely perceptible on the surface, yet indicating to observant eyes concealed and silent forces at work. And these were observant eyes; Mrs. Bodine saw that Ella was masking feelings and mem-

ories to which no reference was made. Ella began to observe that her father's demeanor toward Mara was not the same as that by which he manifested his affection for her. While she was glad for his sake, and hoped that Mara would respond favorably, she had an increased sense of injustice that he should seek happiness in a way forbidden to her. The thought would arise, "I am not so much to him after all."

One day, near the end of July, Ella, her father, Mrs. Hunter and Mara, were on the Battery, sitting beneath the shade of a live oak. The raised promenade, overlooking the water, was not far away, and among the passers-by Mara saw Clancy and Miss Ainsley approaching. Apparently they were absorbed in each other, but, when opposite, Clancy turned and looked her full in the face. She gave no sign of recognition nor did he. That mutual and unobserved encounter of their eyes set its seal on their last interview. They were strangers.

"There goes a pair, billing and cooing," said Ella with a laugh.

"Mara, don't you feel well?" asked the captain anxiously. "You look very pale."

"I felt the heat very much to-day," she replied evasively. "I am longing for August and rest."

"Oh, Mara! let us shut up shop at once," cried Ella. "Papa is at leisure now and we can make little expeditions down the bay, out to Summerville and elsewhere."

"No," Mara replied, "I would rather do just what we agreed upon. It's only a few days now."

"You are as sot as the everlasting hills."

Mara was silent, and glad indeed that her quiet face gave no hint of the tumult in her heart.

Mrs. Hunter's eyes were angrily following Clancy and Miss Ainsley. "Well," she said, with a scornful laugh, "that renegade Southerner has found his proper match in that Yankee coquette. I doubt whether he gets her though, if a man ever does get a born flirt. When she's through

with Charleston she'll be through with him, if all I hear of her is true."

"Oh, you're mistaken, Mrs. Hunter," Ella answered. "She fairly dotes on him, and if he don't marry her he's a worse flirt than she is. Think of Mr. Clancy's blue blood. She undoubtedly appreciates that."

"I'm inclined to think that he was a changeling, and that old Colonel Clancy's child was spirited away."

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hunter, but I differ with you. While I cannot share in many of Mr. Clancy's views and affiliations, he has the reputation of being sincere and straightforward. Even his enemies must admit that he seeks to make his friendliness to the North conducive to Southern interests."

Mara's heart smote her that even Captain Bodine had been fairer to Clancy than she had been.

Words rose to Ella's lips, but she repressed them, and soon afterward they returned to their respective homes.

Mara early retired to the solitude of her own room, for that cold mutual glance on the Battery had suggested a new thought not yet entertained. In her mental excitement it promised to banish the dreary stagnation of her life. She must have a motive, and if it involved the very self-sacrifice that she had been warned against, so much the better.

"It would teach Owen Clancy how futile were his words," she said to herself. "It would bring happiness to my father's friend; it would become a powerful incentive in my own life, and, above all, would compel me to banish the thought of one to whom I have said I will never speak again."

The more she dwelt upon this course, the more clear it became in her warped judgment the one path of escape from an aimless, hopeless existence fast becoming unendurable. She was not by any means wholly selfish in reaching her decision, for thoughts of her own need did not predominate. "If I cannot be happy myself," she reasoned, "I can make Captain Bodine happy, for there could not be a more de-

voted wife than I will become, if he puts into words the language of his eyes. Ella has already ceased to be in true sympathy with him in matters that have made so much of the warp and woof of his life. We two are one in these respects. I can and will cast out all else if my motive is strong enough."

CHAPTER XXXIII

A SURE TEST

CLANCY had gone to Nature to be calmed and healed, but he had brought a spirit at variance with her teachings. He soon recognized that he was neither receptive nor docile. He chafed impatiently and angrily at Mara's obduracy, which, nevertheless, only increased his love for her. The deepest instincts of his nature made him feel that she belonged to him, and he to her. The barrier between them was so intangible that he was in a sort of rage that he could not brush it aside. Reflection always brought him back to the conviction that she did love him. Her passionate words: "If my heart break a thousand times I will never speak to you again," grew more and more significant. Odd fancies, half-waking dreams about her, pursued him into the solitude of the forest. She seemed like one imprisoned; he could see, but could not reach and release her. Again she was under a strange, malign spell, which some day might suddenly be broken—broken all too late.

Then she would dwell in his thoughts as the victim of a species of moral insanity which might pass away. At times her dual life became so clear to him that he was almost impelled to hasten back to the city, in the belief that he could speak such strong, earnest words as would enable her to cast aside her prejudices, and break away from the influences which were darkening and misshaping her life. Then he would despondently recall all that he had said and done, and how futile had been his effort.

He neither fished nor hunted, but passed the time either in long tramps, or in sitting idly tormented by perturbed thoughts. Believing that he had reached a crisis in his life, it was his nature to come to some decision. He was essentially a man of action, strong-willed and resolute. He despised what he termed weakness, forgetting that the impulses of strength often lead to error, for the reason that patience and fortitude are lacking.

In facing the possibilities of the future, he began to yield to the promptings of ambition, a trait which had no mean place in his character. "If Mara denies her love, and sacrifices herself to Bodine," he reasoned, "what is there left for me but to make the most of my life by attaining power and influence? I can only put pleasures and excitements in the place of happiness. I won't go through life like a winged bird."

When such thoughts were in the ascendant, Miss Ainsley presented herself to his fancy, alluring, fascinating, beckoning. She seemed the embodiment of that brilliant career which he regarded as the best solace he could hope for. Often, however, he would wake in the night, and, from his forest bivouac, look up at the stars. Then a calm, deep voice in his soul would tell him unmistakably that, even if he attained every success that he craved, his heart would not be in it, that he would always hide the melancholy of a lifelong disappointment. All these misgivings and compunctions usually ended in the thought: "Caroline Ainsley and all that she represents is the best I can hope for now. She may be playing with me—I'm not sure. If she will marry me, I can probably give her as true a regard as she will bestow upon me. She is not a woman to love devotedly and unselfishly, not counting the cost. I could not marry such a woman, for I feel it would be base to take what I could not return; but I could marry her. I would do her no wrong, for I could give to her all the affection to which she is entitled, all that she would actually care for. If I am mistaken, I am totally at fault in the impres-

sion which she has made upon me, and I do not think that I am. I am not in love with her, and therefore am not blind. She is not in love with me. It has merely so happened that I have proved agreeable to her, pleased, amused, and interested her. Possibly I have led her to feel that we are so companionable that a life journey together would be quite endurable. My reason, all my instincts, assure me that this beautiful girl has considered this question more than once before—that she is considering it now, coolly and deliberately. I am being weighed in the balances of her mind, for I do not think she has heart enough to enable that organ to have much voice in the matter. Her views and beliefs are intellectual. No strong, earnest feelings sway her. When have her sympathies been touched in behalf of any one or any cause? Oh, my rare beauty! I am not blind. Selfishness is the mainspring of your character; but it is a selfishness so refined, so rational and amenable to the laws of good taste, that it can be calculated upon with almost mathematical accuracy. You are no saint, but a saint might be beguiled into faults which to you are impossible. You are a fit bride for ambition, and would be its crown and glory."

Such was often the tenor of his thoughts, and ambition suggested the many doors to advancement which such an alliance would open. Mr. Ainsley was not only a man of wealth, but also of large, liberal ideas. It certainly would be a pleasure and a constant exhilaration to aid him in carrying out his great enterprises.

Thus Clancy, as well as Mara, was led by disappointment in his dearest hope of happiness to seek what next promised best in his estimation to redeem life from a dreary monotony of negations. He also resolved to have motives and incentives; nor was his ambition purely selfish, for he purposed to use whatever power, wealth and influence he might obtain for the benefit of the people among whom he dwelt. Hers, however, was the nobler motive, and the less selfish, for it involved self-sacrifice, even though it was

mistaken, and could lead only to wrong action. It would cost him nothing to carry out his large, beneficent purposes. Indeed, they would add to his pleasures and enhance his reputation. She was but a woman, and saw no other path of escape from the conditions of her lot except the thorny one of self-abnegation.

Alternately cast down, and fired by conflicting thoughts and purposes, Clancy soon discovered that the woods was no place for him, and he resolved to return to the city, there to be guided by the circumstances of the next few weeks. If it became clear that Mara had not been influenced by his warning, but on the contrary was accepting Bodine's attentions, then he would face the truth that she was lost to him beyond hope. Without compunction he would turn to Miss Ainsley, and, with all the wariness and penetration which he could exercise, seek to discover how far she would go with him in his life campaign to achieve eminence. He was glad, however, that he did not regard her as essential to his plans and hopes. Indeed, he had the odd feeling that even if she rejected him as a husband, he could shake hands with her and say: "Very well, Ainsley, we can be good comrades just the same. We amuse and interest each other, we mutually stimulate our mental faculties. Let it end here."

In this mood he fulfilled his promise and wrote as follows:

"My dear Ainsley—Permit me to remind you of my existence—if one can be said to exist in these wilds. An expedition of this kind is a good thing for a fellow occasionally. It enables him to get acquainted with himself, to indulge in egotism without being a nuisance. I have neither hunted, fished, nor studied the natives. I have not seen a "mountain maid" whose embrace I would prefer to that of a bear. I have merely tramped aimlessly about, meanwhile learning that I am not adapted to communion with nature. At this moment I should prefer smoking a cigar with you on the balcony to looking at scenery which should inspire artist and poet. I am neither, merely a man of affairs. Humanity interests me more than oaks, however gigantic. You see I have no soul, no heart, no soaring imagination. I am as matter-of-fact a fellow as you are. That's why we get on so well together. We can chaff,

spar, and run intellectual tilts as amicably as any two men in town. This proves you to be quite exceptional—delightfully so. I'm not surprised, however, for, as I have said to you, you are sated with the other kind of thing. How long will this fancy last? Now that you are so manly you should not be fickle. You have not half comprehended the penalties of your new *rôle*, for you may find that it involves a distressing frankness. I think I had better close. Letter-writing pre-supposes literary qualities which I do not possess. Men, unless sentimentally inclined, or given to hobbies, rarely write long letters to each other. If unusually congenial they can talk together as long as women. I do not know of a man in town who can equal you as good company; and with this fact in mind, I shall atone for a brief letter by putting in an appearance at an early date. If you have had any flirtations in my absence I shall expect all the details. You know I do not care for such trivial amusements. In this material age, making the world move in the way of business affords ample scope for my limited faculties, while a chat with you is better than a game of chess in the way of recreation, better than moping in the woods. Your friend, CLANCY."

He had barely time to post the letter before the mail-stage left the little hamlet in which it was written. He was soon dissatisfied with himself and the missive, and regretted having written it. Before an hour had passed he muttered: "I never wrote such a letter to a woman before, and I won't again. I put myself in the worst light, in fact was unjust to myself. How differently I would write to Mara! Is it the difference in women which inevitably inspires different thought and action? At any rate, there is a touch of coarseness in this masculine *persiflage* which grates. When I return we must become friends as man and woman. I wonder if she will feel as I do about it?"

Miss Ainsley was not satisfied with the letter at all, one reason being that it revealed too much penetration on Clancy's part. While she welcomed him with her old cordiality she took him to task at once.

"This is a spurious letter," she said, holding it up. "You would never write such an affair to a male friend. You betrayed a consciousness of my femininity in every line. You preached to me and warned me with the same penful of ink. You write as if you were a commonplace male cynic, and I a woman who was trying to unsex her-

self by a lot of ridiculous affectations. I wished a genial, jolly letter such as you might write to an old college chum."

"Do you know the reason why I did not, rather could not, write such a letter?"

"No."

"Because you are not an old college chum."

"I was not aware that you were so tremendously sincere."

"I'm not tremendously sincere—not tremendous in any grand sense of the word, but I've learned that I can be tremendously awkward in a false position. It is absurd of you to fancy that I can think of you in any other light than that of a beautiful woman, gifted with more than your share of intellect. I prefer that our friendship should rest on this obvious fact. We are too old 'to make believe,' as children say. I came to this conclusion within an hour after I wrote the letter."

"Oh, you dashed it off hastily, without giving it thought?"

"I've given you two thoughts to your one," he replied, laughing lightly.

"And none of them very complimentary, judging from the letter." And she impatiently tore it up.

"That's right. Put it out of existence."

"I almost wish I had kept it as documentary evidence against you," she remarked.

"Oh, come! Friends do not wish evidence against, but for each other. I could remain away scarcely a week."

"From business, yes."

"Or from my most delightful recreation; yes."

"You find me very amusing then."

"I do indeed, and interesting also. I am quite certain that your society gives me far more pleasure than mine affords you."

"Since I am relegated to woman's sphere I certainly shall not protest against that belief. I am now under no bonds to be distressingly frank."

"You never would have been any franker than you

wished to be. For the manifestation of that trait I shall have to depend on something very different."

"And what may that be?"

"Why, simply the quality of your friendship."

"I am satisfied that mine compares very favorably with yours."

"In both instances neither of us can escape one sure test."

"Indeed! What test?"

"That of time," he replied, smiling significantly. "Good-by. I'm quite sure that your regard will survive till to-morrow afternoon when we are to take a sail in the harbor, so Mrs. Willoughby has informed me."

Miss Ainsley gave a little complacent nod in his direction as he disappeared, and thought, "Since you are so content and agreeable as a friend merely, I'm half-inclined to keep you as such, and marry some one else."

CHAPTER XXXIV

"BITTERNESS MUST BE CHERISHED"

TO all appearance the long hot days of August were passing very uneventfully to the characters of our story. The cold look which Clancy received from Mara on the Battery, together with the fact that Bodine appeared more lover-like than ever, speedily satisfied him that his best resource was the ambitious career which in his absence he had accepted in the place of happiness. He therefore gave himself up quite unreservedly to Miss Ainsley's fascinations, and, with all the skill and energy he possessed, seconded her father's business enterprises. Mr. Ainsley was sometimes in town, and again absent, as his business interests required; for he was one of those indefatigable men who, with soldier-like energy and fearlessness, carry out their plans, regardless of discomfort or danger. He recognized the fact that Clancy was both capable and useful, and was already inclined to make him one of his chief lieutenants in the South. He understood the young man's relations to his daughter perfectly, and was not at all averse to a union between them. At the same time, he knew how problematical Caroline's action would be, and that it would be useless for him to appear for or against the match. He was aware of his daughter's attitude in regard to marriage, and also convinced that she would take her own course.

It would seem that she was taking no course whatever at present, but indolently and complacently letting matters drift. She sometimes smilingly thought, "I scarcely know

whether Mr. Clancy is friend or lover. I suppose I could lead him to be more pronounced in either character if I chose, but since he is so agreeable as he is, I would be a fool not to keep everything *in statu quo* till I wish a change. Life is too long to give up a pleasure before you are through with it."

Clancy quietly studied her mood, and was in no greater hurry than herself. Indeed, both felt that they had arrived at a comparatively clear mutual understanding, and so were quite at their ease, she enjoying his society abundantly, and he hers, as far as his bitter memories would permit.

Quick of apprehension, Bodine soon perceived a change in Mara's attitude toward him, but was considerate in availing himself of such slight encouragement as she gave. He had been taught by her manner that her first feeling on the discovery of a warmer regard than she had expected was that of repulsion. He now believed that she had thought the matter over, and was learning that it might not be impossible to regard him in a new and different light. Long since the ardor of youth had passed, and he was disposed to allow her time to become accustomed to the thought of wifehood. In the meantime he put forth every effort to prove himself companionable, in spite of their disparity in age. It was not his delicate and thoughtful attentions, however, which reconciled her to the future that she had accepted, but rather the motives already revealed. Under the influence of these, a certain species of mental excitement had been evoked. She had not ceased to suffer, but she had ceased merely to exist.

There was something now to look forward to, sacred duties to anticipate, and a future which was not a blank. She believed that in giving help and happiness to another she would more surely trample on self, and make it the vantage-ground for a greater devotion than that of most women whose love is often partly self-love. In regarding her first pure love and all its promptings as the phase of self to be destroyed, she was committing her fatal error; and of this

error, not only Clancy's words, but also her own heart, often warned her. But she was not one to turn back, having once resolved upon a course.

She had far too much delicacy and maidenly pride to suggest consciously to Bodine the nature of her thoughts, but she was willing that he should see that she no longer shrank outwardly from his occasional manifestations of a tenderer regard than he bestowed upon Ella. That something in her woman's nature beyond her control did shrink and plead for escape, she knew well; but to conquer this instinctive aversion was a part of the task which she had set for herself.

Not only quick-witted Ella, but also Mrs. Bodine and Mrs. Hunter, saw the drift of affairs, and gave their unhesitating approval. Mrs. Hunter was glad, because it would destroy Clancy's prospects forever, and prove a sort of triumph over him. Then it was, as she assured Mara one day, "eminently fitting. Your father and mother would both approve."

"That thought comes to me, too," calmly rejoined the girl. "I hope they will—I think they will. But let us not talk further till all is settled."

Mrs. Bodine believed the marriage would result well on other grounds. "Cousin Hugh," she said one day when they were alone, "you may shut me up if I am meddling, but you are not thinking of Mara in the same way that you did in the spring."

"I admit it, Cousin Sophy, and you need not shut up."

"Well, I reckon it will come about. On general principles I don't approve of such marriages, but I suppose there are exceptions to most rules. As I have said to you before, Mara is as old in her feelings as you are, and I think you will be happier together than you would be apart. I never understood Mara altogether; but of one thing I am certain, she must have some strong motive, something or some person for whom she can sacrifice herself; and, being a woman, she would have a good deal better time sacrificing

herself to a man than to anything else;" and the old lady chirped her little complacent laugh.

"Rest assured," said the veteran, "I don't want any self-sacrifice in Mara's case."

"Of course not; nor do I. I wouldn't approve of any actual self-sacrifice, but Mara will try to come as near it as she can. I reckon she'd be more drawn toward a cripple like you than the handsomest young fellow in town, on general principles; and then she has been interested in you from the first, because you, in a peculiar sense, represent to her the past, which has been almost her only inheritance."

"I confess that I have indulged in the same thoughts which you express. God grant that we both are right! She has become strangely dear to me. Once I could never have imagined it at my time of life."

"Oh, the heart needn't grow old," was the laughing reply.

The captain's outlook was rendered more favorable by the reception of a note which contained the offer of a better position than that held in the employ of the detested Mr. Houghton. When he investigated the matter he learned that the offer came largely through the influence of Clancy, and this last confirmed the veteran's impression that the young man was using his influence and prosperity for the benefit of the South.

To Mara it was a bitter ordeal to listen to Bodine's complacent explanation of the affair, and she was glad that she was told in the dusky twilight, which concealed an expression of pain even beyond her control. Words of passionate protest rose to her very lips, but she remembered in time that they would involve revelations which would thwart her purpose to make him happy at every cost to herself. If he ever learned what Clancy had been to her, what he was at this agonized moment, her vocation, if not gone, would be impaired beyond remedy. Afterward, in the solitude of her own room, she accepted this bitter experience, as she had resolved to accept all others, as a part of her lot.

In her morbidness she became Jesuitical. Her father's old friend should be made as happy as it was in her power to render him. Whatever interfered with this purpose should be concealed or trampled upon. Of Clancy she said bitterly, "If he thinks he has been magnanimous, how little he understands me."

Clancy's motives had been somewhat mixed. He was willing that her pride should be rebuked and wounded, and he also wished her to know that he was above the petty resentment of jealousy.

Poor Ella felt that she was becoming isolated; an impression, however, which she would not have had were it not for her recent experiences. Had her heart remained as light and untouched as it was when we first met her, her pleasure over her father's prospects would have been unalloyed. Even now her satisfaction was deep and sincere, but it was not in human nature to forget how summarily she had been denied the happiness so sweet to those of her age. She felt, however, that all were against her; that even kind old Mrs. Bodine would not listen patiently to her thoughts. So she kept them to herself, and sought by forced mirthfulness to disguise them. She talked and laughed with the young men who called upon her, and they came in increasing numbers as inevitably as a flower attracts the bees. She was the life of the "family excursions," as she characterized in her thoughts those in which Mara and Mrs. Hunter had a part; and she joined others of which her father approved, but there was often trouble and sadness in her eyes, and her cheeks and form were losing their roundness of outline. Mrs. Bodine was not deceived. She noted everything silently, and thought, "She is making a brave fight; she must make a brave fight. There is no other course for her. I reckon she'll win it, as many a girl has before."

The old lady was thoughtful, kind, and very attentive. At the same time, with the nicest tact, she infused a firmness and spirit into her demeanor which made the girl feel

that her cousin had sympathy only with the effort to conquer or forget. And she honestly made such effort, but was often aghast at its futility. In her brusque way she said to herself, "What's the use of trying? It seems like a disease which must run its course till old Father Time brings some sort of a cure."

One day she went to see Aun' Sheba, and found the old woman feeling poorly.

"Yes, honey," she said, "bein' lazy doan 'gree wid me 'tall. I doan see how Unc. stan's it all de yeah roun'."

"I hab de rheumatiz," Uncle Sheba remarked in the way of explanation.

"Now, Unc., dat ar rheumatiz is like de scapegoat in de Bible. You loads it up with all you sins. We all hope dat w.n you got so sot on dat you'd turn ober a new leaf. How you stan' it sittin' roun' all day I doan see, no how. I'se gettin' so heaby an' logy an' oncomf'ble dat I'se gwine ter take in washin' de rest ob de month."

"I'd be glad to go to work to-morrow, too," said Ella. "I'd be glad of anything to make the time pass."

"Why, honey, wot you want de time to pass quick fer? You oughter be like de hummin'-bird, gederin sweets all de day."

"I feel more like a croaking raven."

"You'se quar, Missy Ella. You'se up an' you'se down, an' you doan know why. Ole Hannah dat lib wid you says dat you'se gittin' a lot ob beaux. Why, you eben make a 'pression on dat big, 'ansome Northern chap, ole Houghton's son, wen you doan know it. More'n once he ax me which de cakes you make, an' wen I tell him, he wanter buy dem all."

"That's very funny," Ella said, and there was the old mirthful ring in her laugh.

"You know him?" Aun' Sheba asked, quickly.

"I met him at Mrs. Willoughby's."

"Shuah now! Dat counts fer it. Well, he'd gobble all

you'se cake if I'd let him, but I had oder cus'mers on my min'; an' he seem ter hab on'y you on his min'."

"You were very wise, Aun' Sheba. So much cake would have made him ill," and she still laughed joyously.

" 'Pears to me you'se gittin' betteh, Missy Ella."

"Oh, you always make me laugh and hearten me up, Aun' Sheba."

"Well, who'd a tink dat ar civil, nice spoken young man was de son ob dat ole sinner Houghton. Reckon Missy Mara doan like you'se talkin' wid him at Mis Wil'by's."

"Of course not. He's a Northern Vandal, you know."

"Dunno notin' 'bout Wandals. I jedge folks by wot dey is deysefs. He couldn't help bein' bawn at de Norf. Long as he 'habe himself, wot dat agin him?"

"Being born at the North is a crime, some people think."

"Yes, I know, but dat ar suttingly fool talk. Dat ain't de trouble so much in dis case. It's cause he's dat ole 'tankerous Houghton's son."

"He isn't to blame for that either," Ella answered, hotly.

"Lor', Missy Ella! how you stan' up fer 'im."

"I don't believe in injustice, Aun' Sheba," said Ella quietly, conscious meanwhile that her cheeks were getting very red.

"De heat *am* po'ful," Aun' Sheba remarked, sententiously. Then her plump form began to shake with mirth. "Dar now, Missy Ella," she added, "de blin' ole woman kin see as fur in de grin-stone as de next one. He'd stan' up fer you agin de hull worl. It shines right out in his 'ansome face."

"How very blind you are, Aun' Sheba! Why, he's not fit to be spoken to, and I'm not to speak to him again as long as I live. Good-by. Good-by, Uncle Sheba. I've heard that sawing wood was the best cure for rheumatism known;" and she flitted out of the dusky cabin like a tropical bird.

Aun' Sheba still laughed to herself, and remarked, "Unc., s'pose you try Missy Ella's cure?"

"Wot she know 'bout it?" growled Uncle Sheba, with an injured aspect. "Wot de use ob sawin' wood all day wen de town hot 'nuff now to roas' lobsters?"

"Dat min's me, Unc. Why don' you took ter some sittin' wuck like fishin' in de harbor? You mought catch a lobster, or some oder fish."

"De fish an' me 'ud bof be briled in dis yere sun 'fore we got home."

"Dar, Unc., you wouldn't go to Heben 'less you was toted."

"Ob cose not. Doan de Bible say de angels gwine ter tote us?"

"Well, I s'pose dey is.—Ef a body ony know'd weder it ud be up or down."

"Dar now, Aun' Sheba, wot fer you talk so se'rus in Augst? Nex' winter we'se gwine ter hab a refreshin' from on high."

"P'raps you won' lib till nex' winter, Unc."

Uncle Sheba began to hitch uneasily, and remarked, "I doan see no use ob sech oncomf'ble talk in de restin' time ob de yeah."

Aun' Sheba soon forgot him in her unspoken thoughts of Ella and young Houghton.

"I begins ter unerstan' dat leetle gal now, an' all her goins on—puttin' awspice in de cake twice, an' sayin' quar tings. Well, well, I knows dey's all agin her, po' chile. Wot foolishness it all am! I once jam my han' in de do' —s'pose I went on jamin' for eber. Der's no use ob der lookin' glum at me, fer dat young man's gwine ter hab all her cakes he wants. I won'er if Missy Mara got de same 'plaint as Missy Ella. She bery deep, an' won' let on, eben ter her ole nuss. Pears ter me de cap'n's gittin' kiner lopsided toward her, but I don' belibe dat'll wuck."

Ella was both gladdened and saddened by her visit. Houghton's buying her cake was one of those little homely facts on which love delights to dwell; for the heart instinctively knows that genuine love permeates the whole being,

prompting to thoughtfulness in small matters which indifference overlooks. She could not but be glad that he had seemed to have "on'y you on his min'"; and then she grieved that all which was coming about so naturally, like a spring growth, should have been harshly smitten by the black frost of prejudice and hate.

After an early dinner that evening her father asked her kindly to go with him and Mara to the Battery; but she declined, saying she would rather keep Mrs. Bodine company. He did not urge her; and he had been so preoccupied by his thoughts as not to observe that she was pale and dejected, in spite of her efforts to appear as usual.

When alone Mrs. Bodine said, "You should have gone, Ella. You need the fresh cool air from the water. Why didn't you go?"

"Oh!" said the girl, in assumed lightness of tone, "three is sometimes a crowd."

"You shouldn't feel that way, Ella. You would never be a crowd."

"You are forgetting your old experiences, Cousin Sophy."

"No, I'm not. So you see whither affairs are tending?"

"Oh, cousin! Am I a bat?"

"I hope you are not averse."

"No, Cousin Sophy, I would do anything, and suffer much, to make papa happy. You know how I love Mara, though we disagree on many points; and if she and papa would be happier— Oh! why can't I be happy, too?" and she gave way to a tempest of sobs.

"We all wish you to be happy, Ella," said Mrs. Bodine, soothingly.

"Yes, in your own way," she replied, brokenly. "What happened before I was born must be considered first. If love is sweet to papa at his age think what it is to me?"

"You must not imagine, Ella dear, that we don't feel with you and for you. I am proud of you as I watch your brave fight in which you will conquer."

"Why should I conquer when my heart tells me that the one I love is worthy of my love? It hurts me, it wounds my very soul, that he and I should be spoken to as if we had committed a crime. How could my love be so sacred and heavenly if it were wrong? Oh, how I hate, hate! There is nothing so hateful as hate."

"But, Ella, you don't consider all—"

"There is no need of considering all, Cousin Sophy. There are some things which stand out so clearly that all else is insignificant. Mr. Houghton hates papa and me. Does papa love him or his son? You know me, faulty, foolish little girl that I am; but think of that man raging at his son because he dared to love me! If George had committed a crime his father would have spent a fortune in defending him. To love me was worse than a crime. He would have been turned into the streets. Oh, it's all so unjust, it's all the spawn of hate!"

Mrs. Bodine was aghast at the intensity of the girl's feelings, but could only say, "Well, Ella, dear, since things are as they are you must fight it out. Trust the experience of an old woman. Marriages in the face of such bitter opposition are rarely happy."

"Yes, the bitterness must be sacredly cherished, whatever else is lost. Oh, I know, Cousin Sophy, I know I must fight it out if it takes my lifetime, and all the while know that God would bless our love if hate hadn't blighted it."

CHAPTER XXXV

NOBLE REVENGE

GEORGE HOUGHTON took to the mountain solitudes a better and purer spirit than Clancy, who was so ready to be consoled by ambition and the fascinations of a woman incapable of evoking the best in his nature. The young fellow did fish and hunt with tireless energy, and many a humble cabin was stocked with provisions by his exertions. Believing that not only Bodine, but also that Ella herself, would have nothing to do with him, his affectionate nature turned to his father. With a large charity he tried to forget the stern words which had sorely wounded him, and only to remember the influences on his father's life which had led to their utterance. He recalled the abundant proofs of his kindness and liberality; and, now that his young dream was over, he purposed to carry out the old man's schemes as best he could.

He tired himself out through the long hot days, and slept at night from exhaustion. The time thus passed until he felt that he had the strength to return to the city, and act as if Ella did not dwell there. He also thought of his father's need of help, and regretted that he had remained away so long.

The old man looked at him keenly when he returned, seeing that the young face had grown older by years, and that steadiness of purpose and resolution were in its every bronzed line.

"It's all right, father," George replied to the questioning glance. "I've come back to carry out your wishes."

"Ah, my boy! now I know that you are made of the same stuff as your brother. Well, you won't be sorry."

"I wish to leave this town, and I wish you would too. I don't think it's good for you to be here."

"I'll think of it, George. I have thought of it. I shouldn't be mulish since you are not."

"I'm glad you feel so about leaving, father. Go back with me to your old congenial friends and surroundings. I, for one, don't wish to stay where I am ostracized."

"Oh, curse the rebels! I've punished them! I've punished them well!"

"I don't wish to punish them; but, since they will have nothing to do with me, a decent self-respect leads me to go where I can be treated according to my behavior."

"I know you can't feel as I do. All I ask is that you have nothing to do with them."

For the next few days, regardless of the heat, George toiled early and late in his father's office, incited by the hope of soon taking the old man away on a visit to the more bracing climate of the North. In the evenings he refreshed himself by a long swim in the harbor, and by sailing his boat over its waters.

One evening, while enjoying the latter favorite pastime in the early twilight, it so happened that he caught sight, in a passing boat, of a group which made his heart throb quickly. In the stern sat Captain Bodine steering the vessel toward the city. Ella was near him, and two ladies whom he did not know. As a hunter his eyes were keen, and he was satisfied that he had not been recognized. He could not resist the temptation to get a better view of Ella, and, drawing his hat over his eyes, he began to manœuvre his boat so as to accomplish his purpose.

His little craft skimmed here and there so swiftly, as he tacked, that Ella at last began to watch it with a pleased yet languid interest, remarking, "That boat yonder tacks about and sails as if it were alive."

"Yah, yah, so 'tis alibe," said the negro owner of the

craft which Bodine had hired for their excursion. "Young Marse Houghton sail dat boat, an' he beats any duck dat eber swum."

Ella's breath came quick, and she turned pale and red in her conflicting feelings, for it was evident that Houghton was purposely keeping near to them. She saw the frown on her father's face, and that Mara's expression was grave. Mrs. Hunter indignantly said, "He had better go on and mind his own business. Why should old Houghton's son be hovering around us like a hawk, I'd like to know?"

"The harbor is as free to him as to us," Ella answered, hotly.

Mrs. Hunter pursed her lips and looked unutterable things at the girl, but she regarded neither the matron's sour expression nor her father's stern glance, for her eyes were fascinated and held by the vessel which sped along the water like a white-winged gull. No one except Ella and the colored man continued the observance of Houghton. The girl was in a perverse mood, and watched until her father rebukingly spoke her name; then she turned away.

Meanwhile George gazed wistfully at one whom he believed that he might never see again; for he and his father were almost ready for their visit North, where the young man was to remain. Then he saw her steady gaze in his direction. Could she have recognized him? Did she continue to watch him because of some faint interest? His pulses quickened at the thought. After a few moments he said bitterly: "Yes, she knows me at last, and turns away. Very well, away go I, then."

At this moment he caught a glimpse of the western sky, and his sailor instincts were alarmed. There was a single dark cloud rising rapidly, portending not a storm, but sudden, violent gusts. In the gathering gloom all thought of vanishing was abandoned. No matter how Ella regarded him, he would not be far away while there was a shadow of danger to her. Examining his sail carefully he knew

he could drop it to the point of safety at a moment's notice.

The wind on which he had been sailing died out. Then came little puffs from the west. To catch these the colored skipper of the captain's boat took the helm and tacked, presenting a broad surface of sail to their force. Houghton tacked also in the same direction, but with his eye on the westward water, and his hand on the rope which would bring down his sail with a run. He speedily had need of this caution. There was a distant roar, the water shoreward darkened, and then, as his sail came down and the prow of his boat went round to the gust, he was enveloped in a cloud of spray. At the same instant shrill screams of women and the hoarse cries of men came from Bodine's vessel.

The fury of the first gust passed quickly. When the atmosphere cleared a little, Houghton saw that the mast of the other craft had broken, and, with the sail, lay over on the leeward side. He instantly knew that the occupants were in imminent danger. Raising his sail as high as he dared, he tacked toward them with such nice judgment that if he kept on he would pass a little abaft of the disabled vessel.

"Oh, Marse Houghton! come quick," yelled the negro. "She'm won' float anoder minit!"

"Bail, you lubber!"

"Don got notin to bail wid!"

"As usual," growled Houghton.

All the rest were now silent. In his agonized apprehension for Mara and Ella, Bodine felt his heart beat as it had never done in the bloodiest battle. His careless boatman had not recognized the danger since the cloud was so comparatively small, and when he sought to lower the sail something was out of gear and it stuck. The gust struck it fairly, and would have capsized the boat had not the mast broken. As it was, the vessel so careened as to ship a dangerous

quantity of water, which was rapidly increased by every wave that broke over the sides.

Mara and Mrs. Hunter were pallid indeed, but calm in woman's patient fortitude, remembering, too, even in that awful moment, that if they escaped they would owe their lives to one whom they regarded with scorn and hostility. Ella's hope buoyed her spirit, although she felt herself sinking deeper every moment in the cold waters. With love's confidence she believed that Houghton would be equal to the emergency, and his swiftly coming sail was like the white wings of an angel. Then for an instant she was perplexed and troubled, for he seemed to be steering as if to pass them, near, yet much too far.

"She'm sinkin', she'm goin' un'er," the negro yelled.

"Be ready, every one, to jump the moment I lay alongside," Houghton shouted. Then he luffed sharply to the wind, dropped his sail; his light craft lost headway, and glided alongside of the sinking boat.

"Now jump, all," he cried.

The women and negro did so and were safe, but the crippled veteran failed, fell backward, and would have dragged Ella, who held his hand, with him, had not Houghton broken her grasp. As quick as light he sprang into the vessel, now down to the water's edge, and fairly flung the captain into his own boat. As he did so the water-logged craft went down, and he with it. Ella shrieked and called his name imploringly. In the wild anguish of the moment she would have jumped overboard after him had she not been restrained.

"Patience," cried her father, "he will rise in a moment."

Houghton's little boat, now so heavily freighted, had almost gone under in the suction. The negro, rendered half wild with terror, was bent only on saving his own life. He was scarcely in the boat before he had the oars in the rowlocks, and began to pull for the shore. In their eager scanning of the dark water, Bodine and the others did not notice this at first, and when they did the negro was deaf to their

expostulations and threats. The captain tried to reach him as he heaped maledictions on his head, but at that instant another squall swooped down, enshrouding them in spray, and nearly swamping their frail vessel. They sat silent and trembling, expecting Houghton's fate, but the gust passed finally, and the lights of the city gleamed out.

"Now put about, you —— coward," thundered Bodine.

"No, sah, neber," replied the negro; "de boat swamp in two minit if I put 'bout in dis sea."

The veteran began to crawl toward him to compel obedience. The man shouted: "Stop dat ar. Ef you comes nigher I hit you wid'n oar. Bettah one drown dan we all drown."

Ella gave a despairing cry, and found oblivion in a deathlike swoon.

"Truly, Captain Bodine," said Mrs. Hunter sternly, "you must keep your senses. If the man is right, and we have every reason to believe he is, you must not throw away all our lives for the chance of saving one."

Then she, with Mara, gave all her attention to Ella.

The captain groaned aloud, "Would to God it had been me instead of him!" Between his harrowing solicitude for Ella, and the awful belief that Houghton had given his life for him, he passed moments which whitened his hair.

As they neared the landing the water grew stiller, and their progress more rapid. Assured of safety, the negro began to reason and apologize. "Mus' be reas'n'ble, boss," he said. "I dun declar ter you dat we'd all be at de bottom, feedin' fishes, if I'd dun wot you ax. Been no use nohow. Young Marse Houghton mus' got cotched in de riggin' or he'd come up an' holler. I couldn't dibe a'ter 'im in de dark, and in dat swashin' sea."

"Stop your cursed croaking. If you had known how to manage your boat it wouldn't have happened."

"I dun my bes', boss. S'pose I want ter lose my boat an' my life? I'se jis' busted, an' I kin neber go out on de harbor agin widout fearin' I see young Marse Houghton's

spook. I'se wus off dan you is, but I'se he'p you wen we gits asho', if you ain't 'tankerous."

"Certainly you must help us," said Mrs. Hunter, decidedly. "You must get men and a carriage. Captain Bodine has lost his crutches, and his daughter is in a swoon. If you help us I will testify that you did the best you could under the circumstances."

"All right, missus. I kin swar dat it ud been death to hab dun any oder ting."

The carriage was brought, and men lifted into it the unconscious girl and the almost equally helpless veteran. Then one mounted the box with the driver and another ran for a physician, who was directed to go to Mrs. Bodine's residence. The negro carefully moored Houghton's boat, feeling that there might be something propitiatory to the dreaded ghost in this act. He then hastened to his humble cabin, and filled the ears of his family and neighbors with lamentations over the lost boat and lost man, and also with self-gratulations that he was alive to tell the story.

On the way home, Mara took the stricken veteran's hand and said: "Captain, you must bear up under this. In no respect have you been to blame."

"Nevertheless," he replied, and there was almost desperation in his tone: "I feel that it will prove the most terrible misfortune of my life. Ella may never be herself again, and I have wronged one to whom I can never make reparation—a noble, generous boy who has taken a revenge like himself, but which is scorching my very soul."

"You are noble yourself, captain, or you wouldn't feel it so keenly," was the gentle reply.

Mrs. Bodine, without waiting for explanations, peremptorily ordered that Ella should be carried to her room. The veteran, using a second pair of crutches which he kept in reserve, went to the adjoining apartment, buried his face in his hands, and groaned audibly. He knew not how to perform one imperative and pressing duty, that of relating to Mr. Houghton what had happened.

Aware of what was on his mind, Mara came to him and said, "I will go and tell his father."

"God bless you, Mara, for the offer. I would rather face death than that old man, but it is my duty and I alone must do it. Hard as it is, it is not so terrible as the thought that the poor boy died for me and mine, and that I can never make the acknowledgment which his heroic self-sacrifice deserves. It would have been heroic in any man, but in him whom I had treated with such bitter scorn and enmity— How can I meet Ella's eyes again! Oh, I fear, I fear all this will destroy her!"

"Courage, my friend," said Mara, putting her hand on his shoulder. "Ella will live to comfort you."

"Mara, you will not fail me?"

"No, I will not fail you."

He pressed her hand to his lips, and then she returned to Ella.

Mrs. Hunter and old Hannah removed the poor girl's wet garments and applied restoratives. The invalid, whose strength and spirit rose with the emergency, directed their efforts, meantime listening to the fragmentary explanations which were possible at such a time.

"Oh, just God!" she exclaimed, "we are punished, terribly punished for our thoughts and actions toward that poor boy. Ella, dear child, was right after all, and we all wrong. She might well love such a hero."

At last Ella gave signs of returning consciousness. Mrs. Bodine hastened to the captain, and said: "Cousin Hugh, Ella is reviving. You must control yourself. Everything depends on how we tide her over the next few hours."

The length of the swoon revealed the force of the blow which the loving girl had received. Perhaps the long oblivion was nature's kindly effort to ward off the crushing weight. Mrs. Bodine hung over her when she opened her eyes with a dazed expression. "There, Ella dear," she said, "don't worry. You'll soon be better. Take this," and she gave the girl a little brandy and water.

The powerful stimulant acted speedily on an unvitiated system, and with returning strength memory recalled what had befallen the one she loved. From tears she passed to passionate sobs, writhing and moaning, as if the agony of her spirit had communicated itself to every fibre of her body.

"Oh, Ella, darling, don't," cried her father. "I cannot endure this. He has conquered me utterly; my prejudice is turned into homage. We will all love and revere his memory. Would to God it had been I instead of him!"

"There, Hugh, thank God," said Mrs. Bodine, "that Ella can weep. Such tears keep the heart from breaking."

The old lady was right. Expression of her anguish brought alleviation, and there was also consolation in her father's words. The physician came, and his remedies also had their effect.

There was nothing morbid or unhealthful in Ella's nature. With returning reason came also the influence of conscience and the sustaining power of a brave, unselfish spirit. Her father had put himself in accord with her feelings, and her heart began to go out toward him in tenderness and consideration, and she said brokenly: "Papa, I will rally. I will live for your sake, since you will let me love his memory."

"You cannot love it or honor it more than I shall," he replied, in a voice choked with emotion. Then he took the physician into the adjoining room, to consult how best they might break the dreadful news to Mr. Houghton.

At this moment the front door burst open, and hasty, uncertain steps were heard.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A FATHER'S FRENZY

MR. HOUGHTON knew that his son had gone out sailing in the harbor, and, when the gusts swept over the city, became very anxious about him. He was aware, however, of George's good seamanship, and tried to allay his fears by thoughts of this nature. As time lapsed, anxiety passed into alarm and dread foreboding. At last he summoned his coachman, and determined to go to the place where his son moored his boat. As he was about to prepare himself for the street, there were two hasty rings of the door-bell. He sank into a chair, overcome by the awful fear which, for a moment, robbed him of strength.

Now it had so happened that one of his younger clerks had been on the Battery when the rescued party reached it, and he had gathered little more from the colored boatman than that young Houghton had been drowned in saving Bodine and the ladies with him. His first impulse was to go to tell his employer, and he started to carry out this purpose. On his way he remembered that, in horror over the event, he had not stopped to ask fuller particulars, and he turned back to question the negro more fully. When he reached George's boat he found that the man had gone, and that the small crowd which had gathered had dispersed. With a heavy heart he again started for Mr. Houghton's residence, regretting sadly that it was his duty to communicate the terrible news. His feelings increased to a nervous dread by the time he reached Mr. Houghton's door. He feared the stern

old man, and believed that he would always be associated with the tragedy, and so become abhorrent in the eyes of his employer. But, as the thing must be done, the sooner it was over the better.

The colored waiter admitted the trembling form, and exclaimed, "O Lawd! what happen?"

"I wish to see Mr. Houghton."

"Bring him up," shouted the old man hoarsely. "Well," he gasped as the clerk entered.

"Mr. Houghton, I'm very sorry—"

"For God's sake, out with it!"

"Well, sir, I fear Mr. George—"

"Drowned!" shrieked the father.

The young clerk was silent and appalled.

"Oh, curse that harbor! Curse that harbor!" the old man groaned.

"Perhaps, sir," faltered the clerk, "Mr. Bodine can—"

"Bodine! Bodine! what in hell had he to do with it?"

"I could not learn the particulars beyond that Mr. George was—was—in saving Mr. Bodine, his daughter, and two other ladies—"

"Now may all the infernal powers blast that rebel!" and the old man rushed down the stairway.

The frightened clerk and waiter followed hastily, and restrained him as he was opening the front door.

"Sir, dear sir, be patient—"

"Now, Marse Houghton, wot you gwine ter do?" cried the negro.

"I'm going straight to that damned Bodine."

"Den, Marse Houghton, you mus ride. Sam's puttin' de hosses to de kerrige dis minit."

Houghton instantly darted through the house and out to the stable. "Haste!" he thundered, "haste, you snail!"

The waiter helped Sam, and in a moment or two the carriage rumbled away, the waiter on the box with the coachman, and the clerk inside with the frenzied father.

It was his steps which had startled Bodine and the physi-

cian, and they opened the door facing the landing as the old man came rushing up, crying hoarsely, "Where's my boy?"

"Where I wish I was," replied Bodine gravely.

The doctor was a strong and decided man. A glance showed him that Mr. Houghton was excited almost to the point of insanity. Seizing his hand the doctor drew the old man into the room, and with gentle force placed him in a chair. Never for a moment, however, did Mr. Houghton take his fiery eyes from Bodine, who, now that he was in the stress of the emergency, maintained his sad composure perfectly. Only a soldier whose nerves had been steeled in battle could have looked upon the half-demented man so quietly, for he presented a terrible spectacle. His white hair was dishevelled, and his eyes had the ferocity of a lioness robbed of her young. Foam gathered at his lips as he began again:

"Curse your ill-omened face! Such men as you are worse than a pestilence. As a rebel was there not enough blood on your hands? He saved you, why couldn't you do something to save him?"

"Mr. Houghton, I did try. I would have perilled even the lives of women."

"You have virtually murdered him, sir. Did you not say that if he had the trace of a gentleman in his anatomy he would leave you and yours alone? He would rather drown than go ashore with you."

Ella could not help hearing his loud, harsh words, and her long, wailing cry was their echo.

At this instant Mrs. Bodine burst into the room, and her slender form seemed to dilate until a consciousness of her presence filled the apartment. Her face was more than stern. It wore the commanding expression of a high-born woman roused to the full extent of an unusually strong nature. Her dark eyes had an overmastering fire, and her withered cheeks were red with blood direct from her heart.

"Listen to me, sir," she said imperiously, "and stop your raving. Do not forget for another instant that you are a

man, and that there are women in this house whom you are wounding by your brutal words. You, yourself, in very truth will commit murder, if you do not become sane. Did you not hear that cry? fit response to language that is like a bludgeon. How are you worse off than I, who have lost husband, sons, all? Have you not said to your boy as cruel things as Captain Bodine has said? This son of yours was too noble, too generous, too lofty for either you or us to understand in our damnable prejudices and blind hate. Come with me," and, seizing his hand, she dragged him to where Ella lay, white as death. "There," she resumed in the same impetuous yet clear-cut tones, "is as pure and good a girl as ever God created. Was loving her a crime? Go home, and ask God to forgive you, to take you where your son is in His good time. That poor child is the real victim. Unless you are mad indeed you will ask her forgiveness, and go quietly away."

The old man trembled like a leaf, swayed to and fro between his fierce conflicting emotions, and then left the house as hastily as he had entered. As he did so, Ella called after him feebly, but her voice was unheard.

The clerk and the colored waiter stood at the open door, and received Mr. Houghton's tottering form. "Home," he gasped.

In renewed dread they bore him to his carriage, which Sam drove rapidly away. By the time he reached his residence he was in almost a fainting condition, and was carried to his bed. The waiter, who also acted in the capacity of valet at times, gave the old man stimulants, as he said to the clerk, "Go for Dr. Devoe: Sam dribe you. Bring 'im wid you quick."

The old man at last lay still, breathing heavily, and half-consciously making an instinctive struggle for existence. The shock of his passion and the weight of an immeasurable loss had been almost beyond endurance to a man of his age and of his volcanic nature. His physician was soon at his side, and, with some degree of success, put

forth all his skill to rally his exhausted patient. He at last succeeded in producing a certain degree of lethargy, which, in benumbing the brain, brought respite from mental agony.

The impression of Bodine and all the others with him that young Houghton had been drowned was natural and almost inevitable. They had seen him disappear beneath the water, and that was the last that was seen or heard. The boatman's explanation that the young man had become entangled in the rigging of the sunken vessel seemed the only way of accounting for the fact that he did not rise again and strike out for his own boat. The words of Mr. Houghton, recalling that final sentence of Bodine's, which had destroyed George's hope and made him feel that he could not approach Ella again, had greatly augmented the veteran's distress. The thought, once lodged, could not be banished that the youth, in his wounded pride, might have silently chosen to brave every danger in order to prove that he was a "gentleman," and that he would "leave them alone," even at the cost of his life. This result of his harsh words was crushing to Bodine, and to escape from its intolerable weight he tried to entertain the hope that George had found some way of attaining safety as yet unknown.

The young man had not been drowned, although he had had an exceedingly narrow escape. It was not the rigging which so endangered his life. As he rose toward the surface his head struck the pole with which the negro was accustomed to push his boat around in the shallow water, and the blow was so stunning that he did no more than instinctively cling to the object which had injured him. It sustained his weight, but, in the wind-lashed waves and darkness, he and his support were unseen. The tide was running out swiftly, and he and the pole had been swept well astern, while Bodine looked at the spot where they thought he had sunk—a point from which the negro's frantic oar-strokes were rapidly taking them.

Gradually George's clouded senses cleared, and at last

he recalled all that had occurred; far too late, however, for his voice to be heard. He shouted two or three times, but soon recognized that his cries were lost in the dashing waves and howling wind. So far from giving way to panic, he encouraged himself with the hope that his effort to rescue Ella and those with her had not been in vain. Pointing the pole toward the city lights, he tried to make progress by striking out with his feet, but was soon convinced that he was exhausting himself to little purpose, for both wind and tide were against him. He therefore let himself float, hoping to be picked up by some vessel, or, at the worst, to land at Fort Sumter, which he deemed to be the nearest point of safety. Before very long he heard the throbbing of a steamer's engine, and soon her lights pierced the gloom. To get near enough to make his condition known without being run down was now his aim. She seemed to be coming directly toward him, and he thanked Heaven that the wind was dying out so that his voice might be heard.

As soon as he thought the steamer was within hailing distance he began to shout, "Ship ahoy!" No heed was given until the boat seemed to be almost upon him, and he swam, with his pole, desperately to the left to avoid her. Then inflating his lungs he shouted, "Help, if you are men and not devils!"

"Hallo there! Man overboard?"

"I should say so," thundered Houghton. "Slow up, and throw me a rope."

The wheels were reversed at once. A man near the bow seized a coil of rope and yelled, "Where are you?"

"Here!" cried Houghton, splashing the water with his hands.

The rope flew with a boatman's aim; George grasped it, and, with sailor-like dexterity, fastened the end around his body under his arms. Then laying hold of it also with his hands, he cried from the water almost under the wheel, "Pull."

In a moment or two he was on deck and besieged with questions. "Boat swamped in the squall," he replied briefly. "I kept afloat on a pole till you picked me up. There was another boat that I am anxious about. I'll go up in the pilot-house and keep a weather-eye open."

"Well, you're a cool one," said the captain.

"I've been in the water long enough to get cool. Would you mind lending me an overcoat or some wrap?" And he escaped from the gathering crowd to the pilot-house.

The vessel proved to be a little steamer which plied between the islands down the harbor and the city. "That was young Houghton," said one of the passengers.

"—— him!" said another. "It's a pity he and his old money-griper of a dad are not both at the bottom."

Wrapped in the captain's greatcoat, George was as comfortable as his anxieties would permit. No sign of life was upon the dark waters. When the boat made her landing, he slipped out of his coat, leaped ashore, and, walking and running alternately, soon reached his father's house.

Opening the door with his latch-key, he stumbled on Jube, the waiter, who backed away from him with something like a yell of fear, believing that his young master had come back in ghostly guise.

"Shut up, you fool!" said George sternly. "Don't you know me?"

"O Lawd, Lawd! you ain't a spook, Marse George?"

"I'll box your ears in a way that will convince you—"

At this moment Dr. Devoe came hastily from the sick-room, and met George on the stairs. "Thank God!" exclaimed the physician, "you have escaped. Caution, now, caution. You must not show yourself to your father till I give permission."

"Has he heard? Is he very ill?" George asked, in deep anxiety.

"Yes, but he'll come through all right, now that you are alive. I've had to stupefy him partially. He was told

that you had been drowned. Go change your clothes, and be ready when I want you. How did you escape?"

"Picked up by the steamer 'Firefly.' Did they escape? —I mean Mr. Bodine and his party."

"Yes; and, as far as I can make out, left you to drown."

When the physician returned Mr. Houghton roused a little, and asked, "What is the matter? Is George ill?"

"No, he's better."

The old man closed his eyes, and at last said dreamily, "Yes, he's better, better off in heaven."

"Mr. Houghton," said the doctor, kindly, "I've just heard that a man was picked up by the steamer running between the city and the islands. I don't give up hope yet."

"Hope! hope! Do you mean to say there is hope?"

"I do. If you will be patient we will soon know. I have taken steps to find out speedily."

"O God, be merciful! I don't see how I can long survive if he is dead."

Jube, satisfied that George was in the flesh, followed him to his room, and aided him in exchanging his wet clothes for dry ones, meanwhile answering the young man's rapid questions.

Touched to the very soul by the account of his father's frantic grief, George's thoughts centred on him, but he asked, "What happened at Mr. Bodine's?"

"Dunno, Marse George. Marse Houghton run up de stairs, an' dey took 'im in a room. Den I heerd loud talkin', an' soon he come runnin' out all kin ob gone like, and he gasp, 'Home.' We lif him in de kerrige, an Sam dribe as if de debil was arter 'im. Den we gits de doctor sudden."

Having dressed, George opened his desk and wrote:

"CAPTAIN BODINE,

"*Sir*—It may relieve you of some natural anxiety to learn that I escaped, and that I am well and at home. My father is very ill, and absolute quiet of mind and body is essential. GEORGE HOUGHTON."

Then he addressed a line to the editor of the daily paper:

"Rumors of an accident in the harbor and of my being drowned may reach you. This note is evidence that I am safe and well. I will esteem it a favor if no mention is made of the affair."

Despatching Sam with these two missives, he held himself in readiness for the summons to his father's bedside.

Dr. Devoe, in his efforts to save his patient from any more nervous shocks, administered another sedative, and then talked quietly of the probability of George's escape.

The old man's mind was far from clear, and in his half dreamy state was inclined to believe what was said to him. Then the physician pretended to hear the return of his messenger, and went out for a few moments. When he came back he saw Mr. Houghton's eyes dilating with fear and hope.

"Take courage, my friend," he said. "Great joys are dangerous as well as great sorrows. You must be calm for your son's sake as well as for your own. He has escaped, as I told you he might, and will see you when you feel strong enough."

"Now, now!"

A moment later the father's arms were about his boy. With gentle, soothing words and endearing terms George calmed the sobs of the aged man, whose stern eyes had been so unaccustomed to tears. At last he slept, holding his son's hand.

The clerk was dismissed with cordial thanks; George and the physician watched unweariedly, for the latter said that everything depended on the patient's condition when he awoke.

CHAPTER XXXVII

CLOUDS LIFTING

IN Mrs. Bodine's humbler home there was another patient who also had found such respite as anodynes can bring. Ella's fair face had become like the purest marble in its whiteness, but the hot tears had ceased to flow, and the bosom which had heaved convulsively with anguish was now so still that the girl scarcely seemed to breathe at all. Captain Bodine, Mara, and old Hannah were the watchers. Mara now, for the first time, observed how white the veteran's iron-gray hair had become. He had grown old in a night, rather in an hour. The strong lines of his face were graven deep; his troubled eyes were sunken, giving a peculiarly haggard expression to his countenance.

Her heart was full of gentleness and sympathy toward him, and of this he was assured from time to time by her eloquent glances.

Mrs. Bodine was being cared for by Mrs. Hunter, for she was ill in the reaction from her strong excitement and unwonted exertion.

But few hours had passed when there was a ring at the door. All except Ella looked at each other with startled eyes. What did this late summons portend? Mara rose to go to the door, but with a silent gesture the captain restrained her and went down himself.

"Who is this from?" he asked, as he took the letter from Sam.

"Fum young Marse Houghton. He ain't drowned no mo'n I be."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Bodine, with such fervor that he was heard in the rooms above.

"Yes," said Sam, "I reckon He de one ter t'ank." Sam had imbibed the impression that Bodine had left his young master to drown.

"What is it?" whispered Mara over the banisters.

"Young Houghton escaped, after all.—Here, my man, is a dollar. Wait a few minutes, for I may wish to send an answer."

The gas was burning dimly in the parlor. Turning it up, he read the brief missive, and recognized from its tone that the young man still had in mind the veteran's former attitude toward him. He sat down and wrote rapidly:

"Mr. George Houghton,

"*Honored Sir*—At this late hour, and with your coachman waiting, I must be brief. My term, 'Honored Sir,' is no empty phrase, for from the depths of my heart I do honor your heroic, generous risk of life for me and mine; and my sentiments are shared by the ladies whom you rescued. I have been harsh and unjust to you, and I ask your forgiveness. You have conquered my prejudice utterly. Do not imagine that a Southern man and a Confederate soldier cannot appreciate such noble magnanimity.

"Yours in eternal respect and gratitude,

"Hugh Bodine."

As he finished it Mara entered, and was astonished at his appearance. The haggard face, seamed with suffering, that she had looked upon but a few moments before, was transfigured. Anguish of soul was no longer expressed, but rather gladness, and the impress of those divine impulses which lead men to acknowledge their wrong and to make reparation. In the strong light his white hair was like a halo, and his luminous eyes revealed the good and the spiritual in the man, as they are manifested only in the best and supreme moments of life.

He handed Mara the letter. When she had read it she

looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes, and said: "It is what I should have expected from you."

After dismissing Sam he returned to the parlor, and, taking the girl's hand again, began, "God bless you, Mara! You have stood by me, you have sustained me in the most terrible emergency of my life. There were features in this ordeal which it seemed impossible for me to endure, which I could not have endured but for your sympathy and the justice you have done me in your thoughts. Oh, Mara, do not let me err again. You know I love you fondly, but your happiness must be first, now and always. In my wish to make you my wife, let me be sure that I am securing your happiness even more than my own."

At that moment she was exalted by an enthusiasm felt to be divine. In her deep sympathy her heart was tender toward him. She had just seen him put his old proud self under his feet, as he acknowledged heroic action in one whom she had thought incapable of it. Could she fail this loved and honored friend, when a wronged Northern boy had counted his life as naught to save him?

Never had her spirit of self-sacrifice so asserted itself before. Indeed, it no longer seemed to be self-sacrifice, as she gave him her hand, and said, "Life offers me nothing better than to become your wife."

He drew her close to his breast, but at this touch of her sacred person, something deep in her woman's nature shrunk and protested. Even at that moment she was compelled to learn that the heart is more potent than the mind, even though it be kindled by the strongest and most unselfish enthusiasm. Only the deep and subtle principle of love could have given to that embrace unalloyed repose. Nevertheless she had said what she believed true, "Life had nothing better for her."

As Ella still slept quietly, Bodine insisted that Mara should retire, saying, "I and old Hannah can do all that is required."

"But you need rest more than I," Mara protested.

"No. Gladness has banished sleep from my eyes, and I must be at Ella's side when she wakes."

Mara was glad to obey, for no divine exhilaration had come to her. She was not strong, and a reaction approaching exhaustion was setting in.

In the dawn of the following day Ella began to stir uneasily in her sleep, to moan and sigh. Vaguely the unspent force of her grief was reasserting itself, as the benumbing effects of anodynes passed from her brain. Her father motioned Hannah to leave the apartment, and then took Ella's hand. At last she opened her eyes, and looked at him in a dazed, troubled way. "Oh!" she moaned, "I've had such dreadful dreams. Have I been ill?"

"Yes, Ella dear, very ill, but you are better now. The worst is well over."

"Dear papa, have you been watching all night?"

"That's a very little thing to do, Ella darling."

She lay silent for a few moments, and then began to sob, "Oh, I remember all now. He's dead, dead, dead."

"Ella," said her father gently, taking her hands from her face, "I do not believe he is dead. There is a report that he escaped—that he was picked up by a steamer."

She sat up instantly, as if all her strength had returned, and, with her blue eyes dilating through her tears, exclaimed, "Oh, papa, don't keep me on the rack of suspense! Give me life by telling me that he lives."

"Yes, Ella, he is alive. He has written to me, and I have answered in the way that you would wish."

She threw her arms about his neck in an embrace that was almost convulsive, and then sank back exhausted.

"Now, Ella darling, for all our sakes you must keep quiet and composed;" and he gave her a little of the strong nourishment which the physician had ordered.

For a long time she lay still with a smile upon her lips. In her feebleness one happy thought sufficed, "He is not dead!"

At last a faint color stole into her cheeks, and she asked: "What did you write, papa?"

He repeated his letter almost verbatim.

"That was enough, papa," she said, with a sigh of relief. "It was very noble in you to write in that way."

"No, Ella, it was simple justice."

She gave him a smile which warmed his heart. After a little while she again spoke. "Go and rest, papa. I feel that I can sleep again. Oh, thank God! thank God! His sun is rising on a new heaven and a new earth."

Kissing her fondly, her father halted away. Old Hannah resumed her watch, but was soon relieved by Mara.

When George read Captain Bodine's letter the night grew luminous about him. He had not expected any such acknowledgment. With characteristic modesty he had underrated his own action, and he had not given Bodine credit for the degree of manhood possessed by him. Indeed, he had almost feared that both father and daughter might be embarrassed and burdened by a sense of obligation, whose only effect would be to make them miserable. Generous himself, he was deeply touched by the proud man's absolute surrender, and he at once appreciated the fine nature which had been revealed by the letter.

"Now," he reasoned, "as far as *her* father is concerned, the way is open for me to seek Ella's love by patient and devoted attentions. I shall at last have the chance which was impossible when I could not approach her at all. After this experience I believe that my own dear father will be softened, and be led to see how much better are happiness and content than ambitious schemes."

But Mr. Houghton was destined to disappoint his son. He awoke very feeble in body, and not very clear in mind. His one growing desire was to get away from Charleston. "I don't ever wish to look on that accursed harbor again," he repeated over and over.

"We must humor him in every way possible," Dr. Devoe

said to George, "and as soon as he is strong enough you must take him North."

George's heart sank at these words, and at others which his father constantly reiterated.

"I wish to get away from this city, George," he would say feebly. "I will go anywhere, only to be away from this town and its people. Oh, I've had such a warning! This is no place for you or me. Its people are aliens. They destroyed one of my boys, and they have nearly cost you your life, as well as your happiness and success in life. Oh, that terrible old woman, with her tongue of fire! She looked and talked like an accusing fiend. I want to go away from it all, and forget it all—that such a place and people exist. Help me get strong, doctor, and then George and I will go, as Lot fled from Sodom."

"Yes, Mr. Houghton," Dr. Devoe would answer, "all your wishes shall be carried out;" and this assurance would pacify the old man for a time.

When alone with George the physician would add: "You see how it is, my young friend. Your father is in such a feeble, wavering state of mind and body that we must make it all clear sailing for him. Even if he asks for what is impossible, we must appear to gratify him. Anything which disturbs his mind will be injurious to his physical health."

George could not but admit the truth of the doctor's words, and he manfully faced his duty, hoping that the future still had possibilities.

After getting some much-needed sleep the day following his escape, he wrote:

"My dear Captain Bodine—If I had known you better your letter would not have been such an agreeable surprise. Please do me the favor not to overestimate my effort for you and those with you—an effort which any man would have made. That it was successful, is as much a cause for gratitude in my own case as in yours. Please present my compliments to the ladies, and express my hope that they suffered no ill effects from their hasty exchange of boats. I trust that the stupid boatman, who was to blame for your disaster, will not attempt to navigate anything more complicated than a wheel-

barrow hereafter. I regret to say that my father is still very ill, and that his physician enjoins the utmost care and quiet until he recovers from his nervous shock. With much respect, I am, Gratefully yours,

"GEORGE HOUGHTON."

When Ella's physician came the following day, he found his patient so much better that he could not account for it until he had heard the glad news. The healthful, elastic nature of the girl rallied swiftly. George's second letter was handed her to read, and she kept it. Being clever with her pencil, she made a ludicrous caricature of the colored boatman caught in a gale with a wheelbarrow. Her smile was glad now, for hope grew stronger every moment. Her right to love was now unquestioned, and even her proud father and cousin had only words of respect and admiration for the lover who, in a few brief moments, had vindicated the manhood which she had recognized in the first moments of their chance encounter.

She could not believe that Mr. Houghton would remain obdurate when he recovered sufficiently to think the matter over calmly. "Our papas," she thought, with a little sigh and a smile, "have learned that burying their children is a rather serious matter after all."

When two or three days passed, however, and no further communication had been received from George, her father thought it wise to say a few words of caution. "Ella," he began, "you are now strong enough to look at this matter in all its bearings. Young Mr. Houghton probably finds that his father is as adverse to his thoughts of you as ever. He has himself also had time for many second thoughts, and—"

"Papa," said the girl, with a reproachful glance, "you have not yet learned to do George Houghton justice. At the same time I wish neither you nor any one else to give him the slightest hint of my feelings, nor to say anything to him of my illness and what occurred in the boat. He asked permission to pay his addresses, and he's got to pay them, principal and interest, if I wait till I am as gray as

you are. Dear papa, how you must have suffered! To think that one's hair should turn white so soon! Haven't I got a little gray, too?"

She looked at herself in the mirror, but the late afternoon sun turned her light tresses, which she never could keep smooth, into an aureole of gold.

Mr. Houghton rallied slowly, but grew calmer and more rational with time. He wished to see his confidential clerk on business, but Dr. Devoe said gently but firmly, "Not yet." He began to permit, however, a daily written statement from the office that all was going well. During this convalescence George felt that he must take no middle course. He resolved to have no further communication with Captain Bodine, and not to do anything which, if it came to his father's knowledge, would retard his recovery. One thing, however, he was resolved upon. In carrying out his father's wishes he would draw the line at an ambitious alliance at the North. "Since I have conquered Captain Bodine," he muttered, with a little resolute nod of his head: "I will subdue my own paternal ancestor; then the way will be open for a siege of the fair citadel, the peerless little baker. No wonder her cakes seemed all sugar and spice." Thus George often mused, complacently regardless of the incongruous terms bestowed upon Ella in his thoughts.

Sometimes these reveries brought smiles to his face, and more than once he started and flushed as he observed his father looking at him searchingly yet wistfully.

Meanwhile he scarcely left the old man night or day. He slept on a cot by his side, and at the slightest movement was awake, and ready to anticipate wishes before they could be spoken. On the last day of August his father was well enough to be up and dressed most of the forenoon.

George began to read the beloved Boston papers, but Mr. Houghton soon said: "That will do, I'm in no mood for dog-day politics. Go off and amuse yourself, as long as you don't go near the harbor."

"I've no wish to go out, father. When the sun is low I'll take a tramp of a mile or two."

"In a week or so more I think I'll be able to travel, George."

"I hope so."

"I fear you don't wish to leave Charleston."

"I wish to do what is best for your health."

Then a long silence followed, each busy with his own thoughts.

At last Mr. Houghton said: "It's strange we've heard nothing from those Bodines. They appear to accept their lives from your hand as a matter of course;" and the old man watched the effect of these tentative words.

George flushed, but said gently: "Dear father, try to be just, even in your enmities. I have heard from Captain Bodine, and—"

"What! have you been corresponding with them, and all that?" interrupted Mr. Houghton irritably. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I merely replied to Mr. Bodine's note the day after the accident. Since then I have not heard from any of the rescued party, nor have I made the slightest effort to do so. Dr. Devoe said you required quiet of body and mind, and I have not done anything which would interfere with this."

"Thank you, my boy, thank you heartily. I shall owe my life more to your faithful attendance than to Dr. Devoe."

"I am glad to hear you say that, whether it is true or not. I wish you to live many years, and to take the rest to which a long and laborious life entitles you. I will show you Captain Bodine's letter if you wish."

"Well, let me see what the rebel has to say for himself."

"Humph!" Mr. Houghton ejaculated, finishing the letter. "What did you say in reply?"

George repeated the substance of his note.

"And nothing has passed between him, his daughter, or you since?"

"Nothing whatever."

"I suppose by this time that little gust of passion, inspired by the daughter's pretty face, has passed?" and he looked at his son keenly.

"It would have passed, father, if it had been only a gust of passion, and inspired merely by a pretty face."

"Humph! Do you mean to say that you love her still?"

"I cannot control my heart, only my actions."

"You will give her up then, since it is my wish?"

"I cannot give up loving her, father. If I had drowned and gone to another world I feel that I would have carried my love with me."

There was another long silence, and then Mr. Houghton said, "But you will control your action?"

"My action, father, shall be guided by most considerate loyalty to you."

"But you will not promise never to marry her?"

"It is true, indeed, that I may never marry her, for I have no reason whatever to think that she cares for me in any such way as I do for her. As long as her father felt as he did, I could not approach her. As long as you feel as you do, I cannot seek her, but to give her up deliberately would be doing violence to the best in my nature. I know my love is the same as that which you had for mother, and God would punish a man who tried to put his foot on such a love. I feel that it would keep me from the evil of the world."

"The first thing you know, George, you will be wishing that I am dead."

"No, father, no!" his son cried impulsively. "You would do me wicked wrong in thinking that. A foolish, guilty passion might probably lead to such thoughts, but not a pure, honest love, which prompts to duty in every relation in life. I can carry out your every plan for me without bolstering myself by marrying wealth and position. My self-respect revolts at the idea. A woman that I loved could aid me far more than the wealthiest and highest born in the land. I believe that in time you will see these things

as I cannot help seeing them. Until then I can be patient. I certainly will not jeopardize your health by doing what is contrary to your wishes. Don't you think we had better drop the subject for the present?"

"Yes, I think we had," said Mr. Houghton sadly, but without any appearance of irritation.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"YES, VILET"

WITH the exception of Aun' Sheba's household, the final days of August were passing quietly and uneventfully to the other characters of our story. Little Vilet had received something like a sunstroke, and she never rallied. Day and night she lay on her cot, usually wakeful and always patient. It would seem that her vital forces were sapped, for she grew steadily weaker and thinner. Aun' Sheba did little else than wait on and watch her, except when Kern was home. When off duty at the fire department, he would permit no one else to do anything for his child but himself. The little girl preferred his attendance even to that of her mother, and the strong man would carry her up and down his little yard in the cool night air by the hour, or rock her to sleep on his breast when the sun was high. No touch was so gentle as his, or so soothing. He would hush his great, mellow voice into soft, melodious tones as he sung her favorite hymns, and often her feeble treble would blend with his rich baritone. He yearned over her with inexpressible tenderness, counting the minutes when on duty till the hour came which permitted his return.

In his agony of apprehension "his flesh jes drap off'n him," as Aun' Sheba and his wife said. He slept little and ate little, but was always punctual at the engine-house to the minute.

Mara and Ella visited the child daily, and tried to tempt her failing appetite with delicacies. Sissy, Vilet's mother,

hovered about her child most of the time, when her housekeeping duties and the care of the other children permitted, but after all her chief solicitude centred in her husband. She and Aun' Sheba often said, "Kern, ef de Lawd wants her we mus jes gib her up. De Hebenly Fader hab de fust right."

"I hab my feelins all de same," Kern would reply. "Ef de Lawd put sech feelins in my heart I can't help it."

On the evening of the 31st of August, Vilet was very feeble. The closeness and heat oppressed her. All, except Uncle Sheba, made a poor pretence of supper. Nothing affected his appetite, and, having cleared the table, he went over to his own doorstep and lighted his pipe. Before it was finished he was dozing comfortably against the doorcase. Aun' Sheba, with a great sigh, lighted her pipe also, and sat down on the Watson steps with her daughter that they might breathe cooler air. Kern took up his little daughter, and began to walk in the yard and sing as usual.

"Well," ejaculated Aun' Sheba, "Missy Mara's call yistidy 'lieve my min' po'ful. I'se couldn't tromp de streets wid a basket now nohow. Missy Mara say she won' begin bakin' till I'm ready. She look too po'ly to tink ob it hersef. Lor! what a narrow graze she an de res ob dem hab! No won'er she all broken up. Dat awful 'scape keeps runnin ebin in my dreams. Bress de good Lawd dat brung Marse Houghton right dar in time!"

"Missy Ella an' Marse Houghton oughter hab dey own way now, shuah," Sissy remarked.

"I reckon dey will," Aun' Sheba answered. "Missy Ella look kin'er dat-a-way. Dey was all agin her 'fore de ax'dent, but now I reckon dey's all cabed in, from what she says, eben ef she ain't talkin' much. I 'specs ole man Houghton is de mos' sot;" and then their anxious thoughts reverted to the sick child.

"Daddy," said Vilet, when her father had finished a hymn, "I wants ter talk wid you."

"Well, chile, wot you wants ter say?"

"I wants you ter let me go to Hebin, daddy."

"I doesn't feel dat I kin spar' you, Vilet," and she felt his tears dropping on her cheeks.

"Yes, daddy, you kin, fer a little while. I'se gittin' *so-o tired*," and she sighed wearily, "an' you'se gittin' all worn out too."

"No, deah chile, I'd ruder tote you all de res' ob my bawn days. I couldn't stan' comin' home an' not fin' you lookin' fer me nohow."

Vilet thought a while in silence and then said, "Daddy, I'se keep a-lookin' fer you jes de same. I'se gwine ter ax de good Lawd ter gib me a little place on de wall near de pearly gate, an' dar I'se watch an' wait till you come, an' moder, an' granny all come. I kin watch bettah up dar, fer I won' be so bery, bery tired. Won' you let me go? 'Pears I couldn't go to Hebin widout you says, 'Yes, Vilet.'"

The man's powerful frame trembled like an aspen; convulsive sobs heaved his breast as he carried the child to th further corner of the yard. At last he buried his face in her neck and whispered, "Yes, Vilet."

"Dat's good an' kin' ob you, daddy. You fin' me waitin' and lookin' fer you, shuah."

Kern grew calm after his mighty struggle, and, in his simple faith, believed that angels were around him, ready to take his child when he should lay her down. He began to sing again, and, a little before nine o'clock, repaired to his post of duty.

As the days passed without any further communication from Houghton whatever, Ella's first glow of hope began to pale. She tried to banish all other thoughts except that Mr. Houghton was very ill or as obdurate as ever. On the last day of August, however, she heard a rumor that the invalid was better, and that his son was soon to take him North. Then her faith began to falter. If George should go away without seeing her, without a word or a line, what must she think? The tears would come at this possibility.

She had noted that her father and cousin had ceased to speak of him, and that their bearing toward her was very gentle, giving her the impression of that deep yet delicate sympathy which is felt for one destined to pass through a very painful ordeal.

On the evening of this miserable day she yielded, for the first time, to great dejection, and was about to retire to her room early when Mrs. Bodine said kindly, "Don't go away, Ella. I feel strangely oppressed, as if I could scarcely breathe."

"I feel oppressed too, Cousin Sophy."

"Yes, dear child, I know you are grieving. I wish I could help you."

"Oh, Cousin Sophy, it would be so much harder to bear now! He looked so grand as he loomed up in the gloom of that terrible night! His eyes seemed like living coals; his action was swift and decided, showing that his mind was as clear as his courage was high. He seemed to take in everything at a glance, and in breaking my hold of papa's hand he almost the same as saved my life twice. And then his leap into the sinking boat, and the almost giant strength with which he flung papa into his own!—oh, I see it all so often, and my heart always seems to go down with him when, in fancy, I see him sink. It was all so heroic, so in accord with my ideal of a man! Why, Cousin Sophy, he was so sensible about it all! He did just the right thing and the only thing that could be done, except that horrid sinking. I can't help feeling that if he had got into the boat with us all would have come about right. Oh, that stupid, cowardly negro boatman! Well, well, somehow I fear to-night that I've only been saved to suffer a heartache all my life."

"I hope not, Ella dear. I cannot think so. God rarely permits to any life either unalloyed suffering or happiness."

"There, Cousin Sophy, I'm forgetting that you are suffering now. I'll put on my wrapper, and then fan you till you get asleep."

The captain meantime was solacing himself with thoughts of Mara—thoughts not wholly devoid of anxiety, for she appeared to be growing thin and losing strength in spite of her assurances to the contrary.

Mr. Houghton had not been so well in the afternoon and evening, and George did not leave him. As the evening advanced the sultriness increased. Since his father seemed quiet, and lay with his eyes closed, he installed Jube in his place with the fan, and went out into the open air. He found, with surprise, that he obtained scarcely any relief from the extreme closeness which had oppressed him indoors. He threw off even the light coat he wore, and walked up and down the gravel roadway in his shirt-sleeves with the restlessness which great heat imparts to the full-blooded and strong. Sam sat near the barn-door, smoking his pipe. At last he said, "Marse George, 'spose I took out de hosses an let dem stan in de open."

"What's the matter with them?"

"Dunno, 'less it's de po'ful heat. Dey's bery oneasy."

"All right. Tie them outside here."

At this moment the watch-dog gave a long, piteous howl, and crept into his kennel.

"That's queer," George remarked. "What's the matter with the dog?"

"Pears as eberyting's gettin quar dis ebnin," Sam replied, knocking the ashes from his pipe and rising. "You'se pinter dar's been kin ob scrugin up agin me, an he neber do dat befo'. Now he's right twixt you'se legs es if he was feerd on someting."

George caressed the dog, and said: "What's up, old fellow?" and then was perplexed that, instead of answering him with wonted playfulness, the poor brute should begin to whine and yelp. The horses came out as if escaping from their stalls, but on reaching the door sniffed the air, stopped, and seemed reluctant to go further.

"Dey's eider gone crazy, or sump'n gwine ter happen," Sam affirmed, looking up and around uneasily.

At this moment the pointer broke away from George's caressing hand, and with a howl such as he had never been heard to utter, slunk away and disappeared.

"I declare, Sam, I don't know what to make of it all. The air is getting so hot and close that I can scarcely breathe."

The horses now came out hastily, and began to snort and whinny. Then they put their heads over Sam's shoulder, with that instinct to seek human protection often noted in domestic animals.

"Marse George, dey *is* sump'n gwine ter happen. See dese hosses yere; see ole Brune dar. He darsn't stay in de ken'l an' he darsn't stay out. Heah how oder dogs is howlin. Dey is sump'n gwine ter— O good Lawd! what's dat?"

George's nerves were healthy and strong, but his hair rose on his head and his knees smote for a second as he heard what seemed a low, ominous roar. Having a confused impression that the sound came from the street he rushed toward it, but by the time he reached the front of the house the awful sound had grown into a thunder peal which was in the earth beneath and the air above. Obeying the impulse to reach his father, he sprung up the steps and dashed through the open door. As he did so the solid mansion rocked like a skiff at sea; the heavy portico under which he had just passed fell with a terrific crash; all lights went out; while he, stunned and bleeding from the falling plaster, clung desperately to the banisters, still seeking to reach his father.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE EARTHQUAKE

OWEN CLANCY was also leading a dual life, and when, at times, conscience compelled introspection, he was ill at ease, for he could not fail to recognize that his sinister side was gaining ascendency. With a feeling bordering on recklessness he banished compunctions, and yielded himself more completely to the inspiration of ambition and the fascinations of Miss Ainsley. It had become evident that Mara was either engaged to Bodine or soon would be, and the thought imbittered and hardened his nature. He gave the day to business, and in the evening was rarely absent from Miss Ainsley's side.

Mrs. Willoughby had invited a small whist party to meet at her house on the evening of the 31st, and Clancy of course was among the number.

Before sitting down to their games there was some desultory conversation, of which young Houghton's exploit was the principal theme. Mrs. Willoughby was enthusiastic in his praise, and even the most prejudiced yielded assent to her words. Equally strong in their commendation were Miss Ainsley and Clancy, and the latter, who had called on Houghton, explained how admirably he had managed his boat in effecting the rescue, and related the incidents of his narrrow escape. Although there had been no published record of the affair, the main particulars had become very generally known, and the tide of public favor was turning rapidly toward Houghton, for the act was one that would especially commend itself to a brave people. Of the secret

and inner history, known only to herself, Mrs. Willoughby did not speak, and in all comment a sharp line of division was drawn between George and his father.

Then conversation turned upon the slight earthquake tremor which had been experienced in Charleston and Summerville on the previous Friday. This phenomenon, scarcely noticed at the time and awakening no especial alarm, had been brought into greater prominence by the very serious disturbances in Greece on the following day, August 29, and some theories as to the causes were briefly and languidly discussed.

Then Clancy remarked lightly, "We had our share of disaster in the last August's cyclone. Lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place. The jar of Friday was only a little sympathetic symptom in old mother Earth, who, like other mothers and women in general, are said to be subject to nervous attacks. Suppose we settle down to our games."

"Nervous attacks in mother Earth and mother Eve's daughters are serious affairs, I'd have you understand, Mr. Clancy," laughed Mrs. Willoughby.

"And very mysterious," he added. "Who can account for either?"

"There is no reason why they should be accounted for in our case," Miss Ainsley remarked. "Woman should always remain a mystery."

"Yes, I suppose she must so remain in her deepest nature," he replied, *sotto voce*, "but is there any need for small secrecies?"

"That question would have to be explained before I could answer it. Will you deal?"

He was her partner. They played quietly for an hour, and then the wife of the gentleman opposed to them rose and said: "The heat is so great I shall have to be excused"; and, with her husband, she bade Mrs. Willoughby goodnight.

Clancy and Miss Ainsley repaired to the balcony, the latter taking her favorite seat, and leaning her head against

the ivy-entwined pillar. She knew the advantages of this locality, for while she was hidden from the occupants of the parlor, the light shone through the open French windows in sufficient degree to reveal the graceful outlines of her person, which was draped as scantily on that hot night as fashion permitted.

"How stifling the air is!" she remarked. "I'm glad to escape from the lighted room, yet am surprised that we obtain so little relief out here."

"It is strange," Clancy replied. "I scarcely remember such a sultry evening. From what I've read I should be inclined to think it was an earthquake atmosphere, or else that it portended a storm."

"Now don't croak," she said. "The stars are shining, and there is no sign of a storm. You have already proved that an earthquake cannot occur. You know the old saying about worry over what never happens. The true way to enjoy life is to take the best you can get out of it each day as it comes. Don't you think so?"

"A very embarrasing question if I should answer it honestly," he replied, laughing.

"How so?" Never had the brilliant fire in her eyes been so soft and alluring. She had detected a slight tremor in his voice, and had seen an answering fire in his eyes. Although conscious of a rising and delicious excitement in her own veins, she believed from much experience that in her perfect self-control she could prevent him from saying too much. Even if he did overstep the liberal bounds which she was willing to accord, she thought, "I can rally him back into our old relations if I so wish."

What she did wish, she scarcely knew herself, and the thought passed through her mind, "I may accept him after all."

He shared her mood, with the exception that he had decided long since to obtain her hand if she was disposed to give it. To-night, more than ever, he felt the recklessness which had been growing upon him, and was inclined

to follow her lead to the utmost, even warily to go beyond such encouragement as he might receive. He therefore replied vaguely, "One may wish the best in life, and not be able to obtain it."

"I see nothing embarrassing in that commonplace remark."

"There might be in its application."

"Possibly. Who knows to what one and one make two might lead?—a murder, like enough."

"Sometimes one and one make one."

"How odd! Still more so, that you should indulge in abstruse mathematics this hot night."

"That reminds me that a man is said to be merely a vulgar fraction till he is married, when he is redeemed into a whole number."

"If I were equal to it, I'd get a pencil, and preserve such great nuggets of abstract truth."

"When you are so concretely and distractingly enchanting, what other refuge is there for a man than the abstract?"

"Is the abstract a refuge?" she asked, looking dreamily out over the dark waters of the harbor. "Perhaps it is. It certainly suggests coolness which should be grateful tonight." Then turning, and with a mirthful and provoking gleam in her eyes, he remarked, "I should think this weather would be just to your taste."

"Why so?"

"Oh, you have become enough of a Yankee to guess."

"Would you say that even this furnace-like air cannot quicken my blood?"

"My friend, I do not believe that anything could quicken your pulse one beat."

"I'll demonstrate the contrary," he said, with a quick flash in his eyes. "Put your finger on my pulse."

She laughingly did so. By a slight, quick movement he clasped her hand, and it appeared to him that the passion which he knew to be in his face was reflected in hers. She did not withdraw her hand. For an instant there was a

subtle, swift interchange of thought. She saw he was about to speak plainly, passionately; she felt herself yielding as never before in all her experience. It was as if a wave of emotion was lifting and sweeping her away. He held her eyes; a smile began to part her lips; the thought came to him that words were not essential, that she was giving herself to him through the agency of the brilliant eyes which at the first had awakened his wondering surmises. He gently drew her to her feet, and she did not resist. He bent toward her that he might look deeper into her rosy face, and felt her sweet breath coming quickly against his cheek. Then, as his lips parted to speak, a low, deep sound far to the southeast caught his attention. Still clasping hands they faced it. With awful rapidity it approached, increasing, deepening, pervading the air to the sky, bellowing as if from the centre of the earth, filling their ears with its unutterable and penetrating power, and appalling their hearts by its supernatural weirdness. They shrank before it down the balcony and through the window into the drawing-room, cowering, trembling, speechless.

They were scarcely within the apartment before the large, substantial mansion rocked as if it had been a cork, and the waters of the harbor had passed under it. The balcony on which they had stood an instant before went down, leaving gaping darkness in its place.

With an agonized shriek Miss Ainsley threw her arms about Clancy. As with uncertain footing he sought to place her on a sofa they were both thrown violently upon it. He saw the chandeler swaying to and fro, as if a thousand lights were dancing before his eyes; saw the other guests staggering and falling. Statuettes, bric-à-brac, and articles of furniture came crashing down; part of the ceiling fell with a thud, raising a stifling dust, which, choking the shrieking voices, rendered more distinct the grinding sound, as walls of solid masonry drew apart, gaped, and closed under the impulse of immeasurable power.

Above all rose the mysterious thunder, which was not

thunder, because now it seemed to come from unknown depths. Time is but relative, and the occupants of the room felt as if they were passing through an eternity of agony.

The climax of horror was reached when the gas was extinguished, and all were left in pitchy darkness. It seemed as if reason itself would go, but as suddenly as the convulsion had begun, it ceased. There was a second or two of breathless waiting, and then Clancy shouted, "Come, quick. There may be another shock."

With his right hand he struck a match, and, supporting Miss Ainsley by his left arm, led the way.

"Oh, what is it?" she gasped.

"An earthquake. Come; courage. We must get away from all buildings." Half lifting her, he swiftly sought the street, and then the adjacent open ground of the Battery.

"All here?" he asked, panting, and looking around. The others soon appeared, Mr. Willoughby coming last, and carrying his half-fainting wife. The negro servants had peceded, and were already on their knees, groaning and praying. From every side other fugitives were pouring in.

"Miss Ainsley, you are with friends and as safe here as you can be anywhere," Clancy said hastily. "There are others in the heart of the city," and he dashed away, regardless of her appealing cry to return.

As Clancy rushed up Meeting Street he felt that any moment might be his last, and yet he was more appalled at himself than at the awful sights about him. The human mind in such crises is endowed with wonderful capacity. It seemed to him that his eyes took in all details as he passed, and that his brain comprehended them. People were rushing from their homes, or carrying out the feeble and injured. His way was impeded by fugitives, whose faces were seen by the street-lamps to be ghastly pale and horror-stricken. The awful impression of the final day of doom was heightened by the comparative nudity of many, both men and women; and among the multitudinous images pass-

ing through Clancy's mind was a picture of the Judgment Day by one of the old masters, with its naked, writhing human forms.

The air was resonant with every tone of anguish, hoarse shoutings, shrill screams, and the plaintive cries of children. Above all other sounds articulate and inarticulate was heard the word "God," as the stricken people appealed to Him, some on their knees, others as they stood dazed and almost paralyzed, and others still as they rushed toward open places for safety.

"Yes, God," muttered Clancy. "May He forgive me for having forgotten Him! There are but two thoughts left in this wreck, God and Mara. How unworthy were my recent motives and passion! How unlike the love which leads me inevitably to breathe the name of Mara in my appeal to God!"

CHAPTER XL

"GOD"

HAD Mara's heart been hers to keep or to give when she met Bodine, she could easily have learned to love him for his own sake. Mrs. Bodine's impression was well founded, that Mara, unlike most girls, was suited to such an alliance. The trouble was, that, before Bodine became friend, then lover, she had given to Clancy what she could not recall, although she strove to do so with a will singularly resolute, and from the strongest convictions of hopeless discord between him and herself. With the purpose to make her father's friend happy was also blended the powerful motive to extricate herself. She had felt that she must tear up by the roots the affection which had been growing for years before she had recognized it, and at times, as we have seen, thought it was yielding to the unrelenting grasp of her will. Again, discouraged and appalled by its hold upon every fibre of her being, she would recognize how futile had been her efforts. She could not, like many others, divert her thoughts and preoccupy her mind by various considerations apart from the truth that she had promised to marry a man whom she did not love. Although so warped, her nature was too simple, too concentrated, to permit any weak drifting toward events. She believed that her life had narrowed down to Bodine, and she had decided to become his devoted wife at every cost to herself. How great that cost would be she was learning sadly, day by day and hour by hour. As we know, she had permitted Bodine to learn her purpose at a time of

excitement and enthusiasm—at a time when his profound distress touched her deepest sympathies. She had also hoped, that, when the irrevocable words had been spoken on each side, the calm of fixed purpose and certainty would fall upon her spirit.

She had been disappointed. She trembled with a strange dread whenever she recalled the moment when Bodine drew her to himself, conscious now of a truth, before unknown, that there was something in her nature not amenable to enthusiasm, spiritual exaltation, or her passion for self-sacrifice—something that would not shrink from death for his sake yet which did shrink from his kisses upon her lips.

Never had she suffered as during the last few days, for she was being taught by the inexorable logic of facts and events. In Ella's crystal nature she saw what her own love should be, and might have been. She had witnessed the girl's wild impulse to follow her lover to the depths of the harbor, and her own heart gave swift interpretation. She was alive because a Northern boy, deemed incapable of anything better than selfish, reckless love-making, had unhesitatingly risked his life to save one who had spurned him. Even Mrs. Hunter's prejudice had been compelled to yield, and she to admit the young fellow's nobility, of which she was a living proof. The wretched thought haunted Mara that Owen Clancy, unblinded, had discovered for himself, what had been forced upon her, that there were Northern people with whom he could gladly affiliate. The shadow of death had not been so dark and baleful as the shadow of the past in which she so long had dwelt, for in the former there had been light enough to reveal the folly and injustice of indiscriminating prejudice and enmity. Worse than all these thoughts, piercing like shafts of light the darkness which had obscured her judgment, was the truth, upon which she could not reason, that she shrunk with an ever-increasing dread from words and acts of love unprompted by her heart.

Like a rock, however, amid all this chaos—this breaking

up of the old which left nothing stable in its place—remained her purpose to go forward. On this evening which was to witness a wilder chaos than that of her long-repressed yet passionate heart, she had said sternly, "My word has been passed, my honor is involved, and he shall never learn that I have trembled and faltered."

Mrs. Hunter had retired, overcome by the heat, and, believing that she could endure the sultriness better in the little parlor, Mara had turned down the gas, and was sitting by an open window. The city seemed singularly quiet. The street on which she dwelt contained a large population, yet the steps on the pavement were comparatively few. Her own languor was general, and people sought refuge in the seclusion and the undress permitted in their own homes.

In a vague, half-conscious way she wondered that a large city could be so still at that hour. "Like myself," she murmured, "it is half shrouded in gloom and gives but slight hint of much that is hidden, that ever must be hidden.—I wonder where he is to-night. Oh, I've no right to think of him at all. Why can't I say, 'Stop,' and end it?—this miserable stealing away of my thoughts until will, like a jailer, pursues and drags them back. Why should a presentiment of danger to him weigh down my spirit to-night? What other peril can he be exposed to except that of marrying a beauty and an heiress? Ah! peril enough, if his heart shrinks like mine. Here, now, *quit*," and the word came sharply and angrily in her self-condemnation.

Then in the silence began that distant groan of nature. It was so distinct, so unlike anything she had ever heard in its horrible suggestion of all physical evil that she shrank from the window overwhelmed by a nameless dread. Instinctively she turned up the gas, that she might not face the terror in darkness. As she did so she thought of the rush and roar of the last year's cyclone, but in the next breath learned that this was something infinitely worse—what, she was too confused and terrified to imagine. Then

she was thrown to the floor. Raising herself partially on a chair she witnessed an event which paralyzed her with horror. The wall toward the street, with its mirror, pictures, windows, and all pertaining to it fell outward with a crash.

For a second all was still, as she looked into the darkness which had swallowed up the front and sheltering side of her home. Then immediately about her began a wail of human anguish which grew in agonized intensity, gathering volume far and near until it became like the death-cry of a city. Unconsciously she was joining in it—that involuntary "*oh-h*," that crescendo tidal wave of sound sweeping upward from despairing humanity. Then this mighty and bitter cry seemed to become articulate in the word "God." With an instinct swift, inevitable, and irresistible as the power that had shaken the city, the thought of God as the only other power able to cope with the mysterious destroyer, entered into all hearts and found expression.

Clouds of stifling, whitish-looking dust now came pouring into the unprotected apartment, obscuring the street and rendering dim even the familiar objects near the terrified girl. For a few moments the nervous shock was so great that Mara felt as if paralyzed. She remained lying on the floor, half supporting herself by the chair, waiting in breathless expectation for she knew not what. The malign power had been so vast, and its work so swift, that even her fearless spirit was overwhelmed.

The shrieks, groans, and prayers, the hurrying steps in the dust-clouded street at last forced upon her attention the fact that all were seeking to escape from the buildings. With difficulty she regained her feet and tottered to Mrs. Hunter's room, but found, to her dismay, that she could not open the door. She called and even shrieked, but there was no answer. A sense of utter desolation and helplessness overpowered her. Who could come to her aid? Bodine could not. At such a time he would be almost helpless himself, and there were women in his charge. With a bit-

terness also akin to the death, which she momentarily expected, she knew that her thoughts had flown to Clancy and to no other human being at that hour. She was learning what all others discovered in the stress of the earthquake, that everything not absolutely essential to life and soul was swept away and almost forgotten.

To go into the street and get help seemed her only resource, and she made her way down the stairs to where had been the doorway. In vain she appealed to the flying forms. Her cries were unheard in the awful din of shrieks, prayers, groans, and calls of the separated to their friends. The impression made was of a wild panic in which the frenzied thought of flight, escape, predominated.

She was about to return in something like despair, feeling that she could not leave her aunt, when she saw a tall form rushing toward her. A second later she recognized Owen Clancy leaping over the ruins of her home. With a cry, she fell into his outstretched arms, faint, trembling, yet with a sense of refuge, a thrill of exquisite joy before unknown in all her life.

"Mara, dear Mara, you are not hurt?" he asked breathlessly.

"No, oh, thank God, you have come!"

Again there was the same ominous growl, deep in the earth, which once heard could never be mistaken, never forgotten. Lifting her up Clancy carried her swiftly from beneath the shattered buildings to the middle of the street. She clung to him almost convulsively as the earth again swayed and trembled beneath them, and the awful moan of nature swelled, then died away in the distance. There was an instant of agonized, breathless suspense, then the wail of the stricken city rose again with a deeper accent of terror, a more passionate appeal to heaven, and the effort to escape to the wider spaces was renewed in a more headlong flight.

"Mara," said Clancy, "at this hour, when everything may be swept away in a moment, there is nothing left for

me but you and God. Will you trust me, and let me do my very best to save you?"

"Oh, Owen, Owen, God forgive me!" She uttered the words like a despairing cry, then buried her face upon his breast.

With a dread greater than that inspired by the earthquake he thought: "Is it too late? Can she have married Bodine?" The anguish in her tone combined with her action had revealed both her love and its hopelessness. He said gently, yet firmly: "We must act now and quickly. Where is Mrs. Hunter?"

Mara had apparently become speechless from grief. Without a word she turned swiftly, and taking his hand led him toward the ruined building.

"No, stay here. It will not be safe for you to enter," and pushing her gently back he ran up the exposed stairway, into the parlor, noticing with dismay the general wreck and the danger Mara had run.

He found that Mara had followed him. "Oh, why will you come?" he exclaimed in deep anxiety. "Where is she? We must get away from all this."

The sobbing girl could only point to Mrs. Hunter's door. Clancy tried it, but found it jammed, as were so many others that night, adding to the terror of imprisoned inmates. With strength doubled by excitement he put his shoulder against the barrier and burst it open. A ghastly spectacle met their eyes. Mrs. Hunter lay senseless on her bed in her nightrobe, which was stained with blood. She had evidently risen to a sitting posture on the first alarm, and then had been stunned and cut by the hurling of some heavy object against her head and neck, the shattered mantel-clock on the bed beside her showing how the injury had been done.

Mara's overwhelming distress ceased its expression at this new horror as she gasped, "Can she be dead?"

"This is no place to discover," Clancy replied, rolling the poor woman's form in a blanket. "Mara, dear, we must get away from this house. It may come down any moment.

Snatch up wraps, clothing, all you can lay your hands upon, and come."

Already he was staggering away with Mrs. Hunter in his arms. In a moment Mara did his bidding and followed. Slowly and with difficulty he made his way down the tottering, broken stairway, then across the prostrate wall to the centre of the street, now almost deserted. He looked anxiously around, calculating that no building, if it fell, could reach them at that point, then laid his heavy burden down, and stood panting and recovering from his exertion.

"I think we shall be as safe here as anywhere until we can reach one of the squares. Put your hand, Mara, over Mrs. Hunter's heart, and see if it is beating."

"Yes, faintly."

"Have you stimulants in the house? Can you tell me where to find them?"

"You shall not go back there: I will go." And, as if endowed with sudden access of strength, she sprang away. Putting his coat under Mrs. Hunter's head for a pillow he followed instantly. "Now why do you come?" she protested.

"Because I would rather die with you, Mara, than live safely without you."

"Oh, for God's sake don't speak that way!" she replied with a sob. "Here, I have it. Come away, quick."

As she hastily sought to cross the ruins in the street she missed her footing, and would have fallen had not his ready arm encircled her and borne her to Mrs. Hunter's side.

"Would to God I had heeded your warning, Owen," she moaned, as she sought to give her aunt some of the brandy, while he chafed the poor woman's wrists.

"You are not married to Bodine?" he asked, springing to his feet.

"No, but I am pledged to him. I cannot break faith and live. You must be my protector in a double sense, protecting me against myself. As you are a Southern gentleman, help and shield me."

"You ask what is next to impossible, Mara. I can only do my best for you."

"Oh, how I have wronged you!"

"Not so greatly as I have wronged myself. I will tell you all some other time."

"No, Owen, no. We must keep apart. We must, we must indeed. Oh, oh, it would have been better that I had died! You must harden your face and heart against me—that is the only way to help me now."

"Never shall I harden my heart against you. Whatever comes I shall be your loyal friend."

"Oh, the cruelty of my fate—to wrong two such men!"

"Bress de Lawd! I'se fown you;" and Aun' Sheba stood before them, panting and abounding in grateful ejaculations.

"Aun' Sheba!" cried Mara, throwing herself into the arms of her old nurse. "To think that you should come to me through all these dangers!"

"Wot else I do, honey lam? You tink you kin be in trouble an' I ain't dar? Marse Clancy, my 'specs. Once I tinks you a far-wedder frien', but I takes it back. Lawd, Lawd! is de ole missus dun gone?"

"No, Aun' Sheba," said Clancy. "Help us revive her, and then help me carry her to a place of greater safety. You come like an angel of light."

"I'se rudder hebby an' brack fer'n angel, but, like de angels, we'se all got ter do a heap ob totin' ter-night."

CHAPTER XLI

SCENES NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN

WHEN George Houghton reached his father's room he heard Jube fairly howling in the darkness, and the old man groaning heavily.

"Father," cried the young man, "you are not hurt?"

"Oh, George, thank God, you have again escaped! This is an earthquake, isn't it?"

"It must be, and I must take you out to some open space at once. Jube, shut up, and keep your senses. If you don't help me I'll break your bones."

Groping about he found a match and lighted a candle.

"Oh, George, you are hurt. Your face is covered with blood!" cried Mr. Houghton.

"Slight cuts only. Come, father, there may be another shock, and it will not be safe to dress you here. Let me wrap you in blankets, and then Jube and I will carry you to Marion Square. I will come back for your clothes."

This they proceeded to do, Mr. Houghton meanwhile protesting, "No, George, you shall not come back." Then he asked a moment or two later, "Why do you take me out at the side door?"

"It will be safer," George replied, not wishing to explain that the pillared and massive portico was in ruins.

As they passed the front of the house, however, Jube groaned, "Oh, Lawd! de porch dun smashed!"

"This is awful, my boy!" ejaculated Mr. Houghton. "Oh, this dreadful city! this dreadful city!"

"The worst is over, I think. Brace up, Jube. If you are so anxious to save your life, step lively."

"Jes hear de people holler," cried Jube, trembling so he could scarcely keep his hold, and he gave a loud, sympathetic yell himself.

"Stop that," said George sternly. "Oh, Dr. Devoe, I am so glad to see you," he added, as the physician came running up. "You are a godsend."

"I was passing near," explained the physician, "and, being a bachelor, can think of my patients first. Jube, if you yell again I'll cuff you. Be a man now and we'll all soon be safe."

They joined the throngs which were gathering on the square, and Mr. Houghton was tenderly placed upon the grass. "Doctor, you and Jube will stay with him while I get articles for his comfort;" and before his father could again interpose George was off at full speed.

"He will come out all right," said Dr. Devoe soothingly. "Never fear for George."

But when the second roll of subterranean thunder was heard, and the cries and lamentations of the people were redoubled, the old man wrung his hands and groaned, "Oh, why did you let him go?" After the quiver passed he sat up and strained his eyes in the direction from which he hoped again to see his son. The house was not far away, and George soon appeared staggering under a mattress, with bedding, clothing, and other articles essential to the comfort and safety of his father. Jube, under the doctor's assurances, was beginning to rally from his terror, and between them they speedily made the old man comfortable.

As George was arranging the pillows his father said, "God forgive me for being so obdurate, my boy. I know where your thoughts are. Go and help her if you can."

With heartfelt murmured thanks the young man kissed his father, and bounded away.

Ella Bodine and her father were truly in sore trouble. A few minutes before ten, Mrs. Bodine's delicate and enfeebled organization succumbed to the heat and closeness of the air, and she suddenly swooned. Ella in alarm sum-

moned her father and old Hannah, and all were engaged in applying restoratives when they too were appalled by the hideous sound which gave such brief and terrible warning of the disaster. The veteran, who sat by the bedside, chafing his cousin's wrists with spirits, barely had time to get on his crutches when he was thrown violently to the floor, while Ella, with a wild cry, fell across the bed. Then, in expectation of instant death, they listened with an awe too great for expression to the infernal uproar, the crash of falling objects, the groaning and grinding of the swaying house, and above all to the voice of the deep, subterranean power which appeared to be rending the earth.

Most fortunately the gas was not extinguished, and when it was still again, Ella rushed to her father, and exclaimed as she helped him up, "Oh, papa, what is this?"

"De Jedgmen Day," said a quivering voice.

Bodine's face was very white, but his iron nerves did not give way. "Ella," he said firmly, "you must keep calm and do as I say. It is an earthquake. Since the house stands we may hope to revive Cousin Sophy before taking her to the street. Come, Hannah, get up and do your best."

From her sitting posture on the floor, the old woman only answered in a low terrified monotone, "De Jedgmen Day."

"Oh, papa, she's just crazed, and we must do everything ourselves;" and, Ella, with trembling hands and stifled sobs, began to aid her father.

"Oh, hear those awful cries in the street," she said after a moment. "Don't you think we should try to take cousin out?"

"If I were not so helpless!" Bodine groaned. "Hannah, wake up and help."

"De Jedgmen Day," was the only response.

"There is no use to look to her, papa. I'm strong. See, I can lift cousin, she is so light."

"No, Ella, it might injure you for life. If we could

only partially revive her, and she could help you a little—There may not be another shock."

They worked on, growing more assured as the house remained quiet. Hannah was evidently crazed for the time being, for, deaf to all expostulations, she would not move, and kept repeating the terrible refrain.

"O God!" said Bodine in tones of the deepest distress, "to think that I cannot go to Mara!"

"Well, papa, you can't help it. Your duty is here. May God pity and save us all!"

At last the ominous rumble began again in the distance. Ella gave her father a startled look, and saw confirmation of her fear in his face. Old Hannah started up exclaiming, "De Lawd is comin' now shuah. I'se gwine ter meet Him," and she rushed away.

With another wild cry Ella lifted the form of her cousin in her arms, and, with a strength created by the emergency, staggered down the stairs to the door. Then a man saw and relieved her of her burden. Bodine with difficulty tried to follow, but could not during the brief shock. When all was still again he threw the bedding over his shoulder, went down and speedily checked Ella's wild cries that he should not delay.

The street was comparatively wide; the houses were not high, and they found themselves in the midst of a group of refugees like themselves—mothers sobbing over their babes, men caring for sick and fainting wives, and children standing by feeble and aged parents. Family servants crouched on the pavement beside their employers, and continually gave utterance to ejaculatory prayers which found sympathetic echoes in the stoutest hearts. Many were coming and going. The place seemed a partial refuge, yet the proximity of houses led one group after another to seek the open squares. In many instances rare fortitude and calmness were displayed. Here, as elsewhere throughout the city, frail women, more often than strong men, were patient and resigned in their Christian faith.

Ella supported Mrs. Bodine's head upon her lap, and others now aided in the effort to bring back consciousness. Fortunately, however, for the poor lady, she knew not what was passing.

Suddenly the group parted to make way for a hatless, coatless man, whose face was terribly disfigured with blood and dust. Nevertheless Ella recognized him with the glad cry, "Mr. Houghton!"

"Thank Heaven you are safe!" he gasped, panting heavily; and he gave his hand to Mr. Bodine.

"But you are injured," said the captain, in deep solicitude.

"No, nothing worth mentioning; merely cut and bruised. I came as soon as I had fixed my father safe in the square. I thought you might need help."

"Mr. Houghton, you are overwhelming us—"

"Please don't think and talk that way. God knows, a man should give help where it is most needed at such a time. This is Mrs. Bodine?"

"Yes, she fainted before the first shock. We have been unable to revive her. At the last shock my daughter carried her down."

"Miss Bodine!" exclaimed George in surprise and admiration.

She gave him a swift glance through her tears, and then, dropping her eyes, resumed her efforts to revive her cousin.

"You may well exclaim," said her father. "How she did it I do not know. Excitement gave strength, I suppose."

"Everything these kind friends and I can do for her seems useless," Ella faltered.

"Let me get my wind a little," said George, eagerly, "and I will carry her to the square, where my father is. A good physician is with him."

At this instant came a third and severer shock than the last, and with it the new terror which sickened the bravest. "O God," cried Ella, "will there be no respite?" Then

observing for the first time the pillars of light and smoke rising at different points, she cried in still deeper fear, "Oh, papa, can those be volcanic fires?"

"No, no, my child."

"I saw a fire kindling in a deserted house as I came," George added excitedly. "Truly, Captain Bodine, this is no place for your family; or," turning to the groups near, "for you either, friends. Ah, see! there is a house almost opposite beginning to burn. Come;" and without further hesitation he lifted Mrs. Bodine and strode away.

Not only Ella and her father followed, but also the others, those who were the strongest supporting the feeble and injured.

They had gone but little way before Bodine said, "Ella, I must go and see if Mara has escaped. I cannot seek safety myself unless assured that she is safe."

"Oh, papa, it will be almost suicide for you to go through these streets alone."

"Ella, there are some things so much worse than death. If you and cousin were alone I would not leave you, but with a strong helper and a physician in prospect I must go. How could I look Mara in the face again if I made no effort in her behalf? Explain to Mr. Houghton."

He dropped behind, then turned up a side street and carefully yet quickly halted over and around the impediments strewn in the way.

Aware of the danger of delay, George went forward with a rapid stride. "Can you keep up?" he asked.

"Yes," Ella replied.

"We must get by and beyond these higher buildings. I have the horrible dread that they may fall on you any moment."

"You never seem to think of yourself, Mr. Houghton."

"I must now," he said after a moment or two. "Here is a corner at which we can rest, for there are no high buildings near;" and he sank on the ground with Mrs. Bodine still in his arms.

"Oh, you are killing yourself!" she cried in deep distress.

"Not at all, only resting. Where is your father?"

Ella explained and revealed her fears.

"I will go to his aid and Miss Wallingford's as soon as you and Mrs. Bodine are safe."

"Mr. Houghton, how can I—"

"By giving me the privilege of serving you, and by not making me miserable from seeing you burdened with a sense of obligation," he said quickly. "That is the one thing I have feared—that you would be unhappy because it has been my good-fortune—oh, well, you understand."

She did, better than he, for his swift coming to her aid had banished all doubt of him.

"Please understand, then, that I gratefully and gladly accept your chivalrous help. Have I not seen it given to the old and feeble before? Oh, these heart-rending cries! It seems to me that they will haunt me forever."

"Please support Mrs. Bodine a moment. That is a woman's scream just beyond us. She is evidently injured, and probably held fast in the ruins."

He ran to the spot, and found that a woman had been prostrated and partially buried by the bricks of a falling chimney. She had been unconscious for a time, but now, reviving, her agonized shrieks rose above the other cries. George spoke soothingly to her as he threw the bricks to right and left. She was evidently suffering the extremity of pain, for she again screamed and moaned in the most heart-rending way, although George lifted her as carefully as possible. Laying her down beside Mrs. Bodine he began in distressed perplexity, "What shall we do now? We cannot leave her here."

At this moment a group of negroes approached. One was carrying a little girl whom Ella immediately recognized as Vilet. Then she saw Sissy, the mother, carrying her youngest, and weeping hysterically, while the other children clung to her skirts. Uncle Sheba brought up the rear, fairly howling in his terror. The man carrying

the child was Mr. Birdsall, who had called with old Tobe just before the first shock. The gray-woolled negro was walking beside his minister, uttering petitions and self-accusations. Old Tobe was comparatively alone in the world, without kith or kin. Mr. Birdsall, feeling that he owed almost an equal duty to his flock, had only stipulated that he should stop at his home for his wife and children. Happily they were unharmed, and were able to follow unaided; and so, like a good shepherd, he still carried the weakest of his lambs.

Ella called to them, and they paused. George, ever prompt in action, saw that old Tobe and Uncle Sheba were able to do more than use their lungs, and he sprang forward to press them into his service. Tobe readily yielded, but Uncle Sheba would do nothing but howl. In his impatience George struck him a sharp blow across the mouth, exclaiming, "Stop your infernal noise. If you are strong enough to yell that way you can do something better. Stop, I say, or I'll be worse than two earthquakes;" and he shook Uncle Sheba's howl into staccato and tremolo notes.

"Dere am no use foolin' wid dat niggah," said old Tobe.

"Howl, then, if you will, but help you shall;" and taking him by his shoulder, George pushed him beside Tobe, made the two form a chair with their hands, and put the woman into it, with her arms about the neck of each.

Taking up Mrs. Bodine he again went forward. The miserable little procession followed, Uncle Sheba mechanically doing his part, at the same time continuing to make night hideous by the full use of a pair of lungs in which was no rheumatic weakness. Motion caused the wretched woman renewed agony, and her shrieks mingled with his stentorian cries.

"Oh, this is horrible!" Ella said at George's side.

"It is indeed, Miss Bodine; yet how glad I am that you have not been injured!"

"Oh, oh, I fear so greatly that my cousin will not live

through this dreadful night; and my father, too, is facing unknown dangers!"

"This is an awful ill wind, Miss Bodine, but the fact that I can help you and yours gives me a deeper satisfaction than you can imagine."

She could not trust herself to answer, therefore was silent, and his thought was, "I must go slower on that tack, and not so close to the wind." The forlorn company eventually reached the square, and made their way to the place where George had left his father. As the old man saw his son, and comprehended his mission of mercy as well as love, he murmured, "God forgive me that it should require an earthquake to teach how much better is his spirit than mine," and his heart grew as tender as a mother's toward his boy.

Dr. Devoe, who was attending another patient not far away, came up hastily and eased the poor creature out of the negroes' hands to the ground.

He gave her some of the wine George had brought for his father, saying as he did so, "Try to be calm, now, madam. I am a physician, and will do all I can for you."

Mr. Houghton promptly sent Jube to the doctor with one of his pillows and part of his bedding, so the woman was made as comfortable as her condition permitted.

George laid Mrs. Bodine on the grass, and then with the scanty bedding Ella had carried, aided in making a resting-place not far from his father. He next lifted Mrs. Bodine's head into the girl's lap, and was about to turn his attention to Uncle Sheba, but was anticipated. Two men had taken him by the shoulders, one of them saying, "If you don't keep still we'll tie you under the nearest building and leave you there," and they began to march him off. At this dire threat Uncle Sheba collapsed and fell to the ground, where he was left.

Dr. Devoe divided his attention between the fatally injured woman and Mrs. Bodine, who under his remedies and the efforts of George and Ella soon revived. Mr. Houghton

looked with wonder, pity, and some embarrassment at the small, frail form, and the white, thin face of one whom had characterized as "that terrible old woman." She seemed scarcely a shadow of what she had been on that former night, more terrible even that this one to the then stricken father. Now the son whom he had thought dead had carried her to his side, and was bending over her.

"Well, well," he muttered, "the ways of God are above and beyond me. I give up, I give up."

Then his eyes rested on Ella. He saw a face which even the dust of the streets could not so begrime as to hide its sweetness or its tenderness, as, with deep solicitude, she bent over her cousin. A conflagration raging near now began to flame so high that its lights flickered on the girl's face, etherealizing its beauty, and turning her fluffy hair to gold. She became like a vision to the old man, angelic, yet human in her natural sympathy. The thought would come, "I have fought like a demon to keep that face from bending over me in my feebleness and age. Truly God's ways are best."

Ella had only glanced at his pale, rugged face with awe and dread, and then had given all her thoughts to her cousin.

As the latter began to regain consciousness, she motioned George away, and with Dr. Devoe, sought to complete the work of restoration. To dazed looks and confused questions she replied merely with soothing words until the doctor said kindly, but firmly, "Mrs. Bodine, you are now safe, and as comfortable as we can make you. Do not try to comprehend what has happened. There are so many worse off who need attention—"

"There, there, doctor," Mrs. Bodine interrupted, with a flash of her old spirit, "no matter what's happened, I thank you for your attention. Please give it now to others."

"Doctor," said George, "I fear the little colored girl who came in with us is dying." They went to the spot where Sissy was pillowing Vilet's head against her breast.

The physician made a brief examination, and heard how a brick had fallen on the child as they were getting her out, then said, "I'm sorry I can do nothing but alleviate her pain a little."

Turning away promptly he began, "See here, Houghton, I must go to the nearest drug-store and help myself if no one's there. Will you come with me? I shall need a lot of things, more than I can carry."

"I can't," George replied, "but here is the man that will, I think;" and he roused old Tobe who sat quietly near with his head buried in his hands.

"Sartin. I do wot I kin while de can'el hole out to burn," Tobe assented rising.

"That's right, my man, and you'll help other candles to hold out."

"Doctor, understand me," explained George, "I must go and search for Captain Bodine, who is wandering on crutches about the city," and he hastened to say a word to his father.

Ella saw him kneel by the old man, and then rise after a moment or two with such gladness in his face that even the blood and dust stains could not disguise it. Little wonder, for Mr. Houghton had said, "I'm conquered, George. I give all up—all my ambitious dreams about you. What dreams they now seem! This awful earthquake has shaken away everything except life, and the love which makes life worth anything. I've seen the girl, and I don't blame you. Go ahead."

"Oh, thanks, thanks. You'll never be sorry; but, father, please don't say anything to her about—about—Well, she don't know, and I must woo before I can hope to win."

"You needn't worry about me. I'm old enough to be wary," and the old man could not repress a grim smile. Then he added, "George, for mercy's sake, try to get the blood and dust off your face and find a coat. You look as if you had been through a prize-fight."

George explained the quest he was about to enter upon, and promised caution. Then he approached Ella. "Miss Bodine," he said, "I will now search for your father till I find him."

Again the girl could not trust herself to speak, but tears came into her eyes as she gave him her hand. He pressed it so hard as to leave a delicious ache, and hastened away.

"Good Lor! who was that awful-looking man?" Mrs. Bodine asked Ella.

"George Houghton. He carried you from home here."

"Lor! Lor! Saved my life as well as yours and Cousin Hugh's?"

"Yes, and now he's going to help papa and Mara."

"Well, well, we'll have to forgive him for being born North. Is that old—"

Ella stopped her mouth with a kiss, and whispered: "That is his father. Don't let us look at him. In fact, I'm afraid to—at least while he is so ill."

"Well," ejaculated Mrs. Bdine, "if this earthquake does not cure him of his cussedness, I hope the Lord will take him to heaven."

"He did not prevent George from coming to me, nor his going to papa's aid. He was kind, too, to that poor woman yonder. Oh, I'm sorry for her, and I wish I could do something."

"Perhaps you can. Go and see."

"I've nothing to put under your head, cousin."

"I'll put patience under it. That, I reckon, is all I have left now. Go, Ella, dear, I can't bear to hear her moan. I'm in no pain, and that wine has quite heartened me."

Ella did as she was bidden. That Mr. Houghton was observant was quickly proved, for he said to Jube, "Take this pillow to that lady yonder. If she declines, say you have your orders, and leave it."

Mrs. Bodine raised herself on her elbow and protested.

"Madam," said Mr. Houghton, "do not deny a helpless

man the privilege of doing a little for the comfort of others at a time like this."

"But you have none left for yourself, sir," Mrs. Bodine replied.

"Madam, you can understand what a satisfaction that will be to me under the circumstances."

Mrs. Bodine yielded and admitted to herself that she was much more comfortable. "I reckon the earthquake is doing him good," she thought, "and that the Lord better keep him here a while longer."

"Can't you lift me up a little?" gasped the injured woman to Ella. "Oh, how I suffer, *suffer!*"

Ella sat down beside her, and gently shifted the pillow so that it came under the wounded back, while the weary head rested against her bosom.

"Ah!" said the poor creature, "that's easier. I reckon I won't have to suffer much longer."

Ella spoke soothingly and gently. Mr. Houghton, who could only hear the sweet tenderness of her tones, wiped tears from his eyes as he again murmured, "God forgive me, blind, obstinate old fool that I've been!"

The adjacent flames now lighted up the entire scene, throwing their baleful light on such an assemblage as had never before gathered in this New World.

The convulsion which threatened to raze every home in the city had certainly brought the people down to the same level. Both white and colored citizens were mingled together on the square in a swiftly created democracy. Character, the noble qualities of the soul, without regard to color or previous condition, now only gave distinction.

CHAPTER XLII

A HOMELESS CITY

THE efforts of Clancy and Mara combined with the vigorous and sensible ministrations of Aun' Sheba at last brought consciousness to Mrs. Hunter. Tearing up a linen sheet they stanched and bound up her wounds, and then Clancy said, "We must get her to one of the squares and under a physician's care as soon as possible."

"My folks is gwine to Mar'on Squar, an' dar I promise ter come," said Aun' Sheba. "It's 'bout as nigh as any ob dem."

Mrs. Hunter looked at Clancy, and shrank from him visibly. He said quickly, "Surely, Mrs. Hunter, all enmities should be forgotten at this time, or at least put aside. We should leave this narrow side-street at once."

"Aunty," said Mara, gently, "Mr. Clancy has saved us both from destruction. For my sake and Aun' Sheba's as well as your own, you must let him do all in his power."

The earthly, yet unearthly, rumble of another shock put an end to further hesitation. It would be long before the terror inspired by this phenomenon would cease to be overwhelming.

Aun' Sheba lifted her arms imploringly to heaven, while the vivid consciousness of the direst peril known brought Mara and Clancy together again in an embrace that was the natural expression of the feeling that, if die they must, they would die together. With such black ruin about them, caused by one shock, the fear could not be combated that the next might end everything.

When the convulsion passed, Clancy and Aun' Sheba immediately formed a chair with their hands, and Mara helped Mrs. Hunter, now ready enough to escape by any means, to avail herself of it. They made their way with difficulty over the débris to King Street. Here they were obliged to pause and rest. No rest, however, did Clancy obtain, for a momentary glance revealed one of the awful phases of the disaster. Three or four doors above them, houses were burning from overturned and exploded lamps. Some of the shop-keepers were frantically endeavoring to save a few of their goods, often, in their excitement, carrying out the strangest and most valueless articles. Clancy's brief glance gave no heed to such efforts, but before he could turn away, a woman with a child in her arms came rushing from one of the burning houses. Her dress had touched the fire, and was beginning to burn. Clancy caught one of the blankets from Mara, and with it extinguished the flames, while Mara took the infant. The instant the babe was out of her arms the mother tried to break away and rush back, shrieking, "There's another! there's another child!"

"Where?" cried Clancy, restraining her.

"In the front room there."

"Stay here, then," and he darted through the doorway, out of which the smoke was pouring as from a chimney.

Mara and the mother looked after him in breathless and agonized suspense. The flames had burst suddenly into the apartment, and through the windows they could see him enter, snatch up the child, and disappear. But he did not come out of the street door as soon as they expected. They could endure waiting no longer. Both dashed into the smoke-clouded passage-way, and stumbled against Clancy where he had sunk down within a few steps of safety.

The mother seized her child, while Mara, with a strength given by her heart, dragged the strangling man to the open air. By this time Aun' Sheba was at her side, and between them they carried him to the spot where Mrs. Hunter lay.

Now that he could breathe he soon recovered; Mara's tender and imploring words being potent indeed in rallying him. His exposure to heat and the smoke had been terrible, but fortunately very brief. He was soon on his feet, exclaiming, "We must go on to Meeting Street, for there we shall have a better chance."

Thither they made their way with other fugitives, Clancy and Aun' Sheba carrying Mrs. Hunter as before, Mara following with the infant, and close beside her the grateful mother with the other child.

Having reached a somewhat open space in the wider thoroughfare, the young man became satisfied that another mode of transportation must be found. Mrs. Hunter was too heavy for the primitive method adopted in the emergency. Aun' Sheba took the injured woman's head upon her lap while he rested and looked about for something like an army stretcher. Among the ruins he found one of the long wooden shutters which a jeweller had placed against his window hours before. Watches and gems gleamed in the light of kindling fires, and were within easy reach, but the most unscrupulous of thieves were honest that night. Clancy carried the shutter to Mrs. Hunter's side, and then watched for some man whom he could persuade into his service.

The great thoroughfare was full of fugitives, and soon among them the mother recognized a man of her acquaintance, who took charge of her and the children. The majority, like Clancy, had been delayed by efforts in behalf of the sick or injured, and already had their hands full. Others were so dazed and horror-stricken that they moved about aimlessly, or sat upon the pavement, moaning and lamenting in despairing accents. It would appear as if the emergency developed the strength and the weakness of every mind. Some were evidently crazed. As Mara stood beside Mrs. Hunter to prevent the crowd from trampling upon her, she saw a half-dressed man, breaking his way through the throng. The maniac stopped before her, and

for a moment fixed upon her wild, blood-shot eyes, then placed an infant in her arms, and with a yell bounded away. Mara, horror-stricken, saw that the child was dead, and that its neck was evidently broken. Clancy came up immediately, and taking the infant laid it down out of the central path, for all kept to the middle of the street.

As he did so, he heard his name called by a voice he knew too well. The feeling it inspired compelled him again to recognize how false he had been to himself and also to Miss Ainsley. Her summons now brought the feeling that he too, like Mara, was bound, and he went instantly to her side.

"Ah, you deserted me!" she said bitterly.

He silently pointed to Mrs. Hunter, who presented so sad a spectacle that even the exacting girl had no further words of reproach, but she glanced keenly at Mara.

"We feared a tidal wave," Mr. Willoughby explained, "and so decided to seek the upper portion of the city."

"Mrs. Willoughby, if you are able to walk," said Clancy, "your husband must aid me and Aun' Sheba in carrying Mrs. Hunter, who is very badly injured."

"Oh, now that the first terrible shock to my nerves is over, I am as well able to take care of myself as any of you," replied the spirited little woman.

"That's like you!" exclaimed Clancy heartily. Then turning, he said with emphasis, "Miss Ainsley, you see that a man's first duty to-night is to the injured and utterly helpless."

"Forgive me," she replied in tones meant for his ear only, "I did not know you owed so much to Mrs. Hunter and her niece."

"I shall owe my services to every injured man and woman until all are rescued," was his quiet reply. Then he helped Mr. Willoughby place Mrs. Hunter on the improvised support, and between them they bore her onward, the others following.

Their progress was necessarily slow, for the street was

encumbered not only with fugitives like themselves, but also with tangled telegraph-wires and all sorts of other impediments. Once they had to cower tremblingly under a tall building while a fire-engine thundered by, threatening to bring down upon them the shattered walls. As they resumed their slow and painful march Bodine met them, his glad, outspoken greeting to Mara filling her heart with new grief and dismay, while it allayed the jealousy and bitterness of Miss Ainsley's wounded pride.

The Northern girl had heard the report that Mara and the veteran were engaged, and here was confirmation. Mara inquired eagerly after Mrs. Bodine and Ella, then took her place at the captain's side, while Clancy moved on with set teeth and a desperate rallying of his physical powers, which he knew to be failing.

Now that Ella was in the square, young Houghton was not so impetuous as to ignore the claims of nature or to be regardless of his outward appearance. He again returned to his home, and saw Sam kneeling and praying aloud near the barn, with the two horses standing beside him.

"Sam, go to the square," he shouted.

"Can't lebe dese hosses. Dey's bofe lookin' ter me, an' I'se prayin fer dem an us all."

"No matter about the horses. The house is too near." Then he ventured into the butler's pantry, cleansed his face and the cuts and bruises about his head, snatched some food, and hastened away. He believed he had a hard night's work before him, and that he must maintain his strength. He had not gone very far down Meeting Street before he met the group accompanying Mrs. Hunter. With a glad cry he welcomed Mrs. Willoughby, and was about to take her hand when Clancy said, "Houghton, for God's sake, quick!"

George caught the end of the litter while Clancy reeled backward and would have fallen had not Mara, with a cry she could not repress, caught him in her arms and sunk with him to the pavement. He gasped a moment or two,

then his eyes closed; he became still and looked as if dead.

Again the supremely dreaded subterranean rumble was heard. Mr. Willoughby shouted wildly, "Forward, quick! We can't stay here under these buildings." He and Houghton went on with a rush, the rest following with loud cries, Miss Ainsley's piercing scream ringing out above all. She did not even look back at her prostrate suitor.

Mara paid no heed to the passing shock, but with eyes full of anguish looked upon the white face in her lap.

"Mara," said the deep voice of Bodine after the awful sound had passed. She started violently and began to tremble.

"Mara, go with the others. I will stay with Mr. Clancy."

She shood her head, but was speechless.

He stood beside her, his face full of deep and perplexed trouble.

At last she said hoarsely, "You go and bring aid. He saved aunty and me, and I cannot leave him."

At this moment Aun' Sheba came running back, exclaiming: "Good Lawd forgib me dat I should leab my honey lam'! My narbes all shook out ob jint like de houses, an' my legs run away wid me, dog gone 'em! Dey's brung me back howsomeber. Now, Missy Mara, gib him ter me;" and taking him under the arms she dragged him by the adjacent tall buildings. "Missy," she added, sinking down with her burden, "go on ter de squar wid Marse Bodine, an' tell dat ar young Houghton ter come quick, 'fore my legs run away wid me agin."

"Both of you go to the square," commanded Bodine in the tone he would have used on the battlefield. "I will stay. There shall be no useless risk of life."

Mara lifted her dark eyes to his face. Even at that moment he knew he should never forget their expression. "My friend," she said in low, agonized tones, "he may be dying, he may be dead. I cannot, will not leave him."

"No, he ain't dead," said Aun' Sheba, with her hand over Clancy's heart, "but seems purty nigh it. Him jes gone beyon his strengt. Ole missus po'ful heby ef she ain't fat like me. Tank de Lawd, I hasn't ter be toted ter-night. No one but Kern ud tote me. Po' Kern! him heart jes break wen he know."

Bodine stood guard silent and grim while Mara mechanically chafed one of Clancy's hands. She was now far beyond tears, far beyond anything except the anguish depicted in her face. In a confused way she felt that the terrible events of the night and her own heart had overpowered her; and, with a half-despairing recklessness, she merely lived from moment to moment.

The earthquake had ceased to have personal terrors for Bodine. He had faced death too often. Nevertheless a great fear oppressed him as he looked down upon the girl he loved.

The square was not far away; Houghton and Mr. Willoughby came hastening back, and Clancy was soon added to the group of sufferers under Dr. Devoe's care.

To Miss Ainsley's general disgust at a city in which she had been treated to such a rude and miserable experience, was added a little self-disgust that she had rushed away and left Clancy to his fate. She tried to satisfy herself by thinking that he had acted in much the same way toward her, but it would not answer. Mrs. Hunter's blood-stained face, rendered tenfold more ghastly by the light of the flames, was too strong refutation, and the fact that Mara had remained with Clancy had its sting. She saw Ella and many others ministering to the injured and feeble, and felt that she must redeem her character. When the unconscious man was brought in, therefore, she hastened forward to receive and in a measure claim him.

Although mentally comparing her conduct with that of Mara, Houghton and Mr. Willoughby thought it was all right, put Clancy in her charge, and began to follow Dr. Devoe's directions. Mara gave the girl a look which

brought a blush to her face, and then devoted herself to her aunt.

Captain Bodine's first act was to speak gently and encouragingly to his daughter and cousin, congratulating the latter on her recovery.

"Yes, Hugh," said the old lady, "I'm safe, safer than I've been at other times in my life. This is but one more storm, and it is only driving me nearer the harbor. You look dreadfully; you're worn out."

"More by anxiety than exertion. It is awful to be so helpless at such a time."

"Sit down here on the grass beside me. I want to talk. I may not have much more chance in this world, but feel sure that I shall do my share in the next. Oh, Hugh, Hugh, we've all been shaken like naughty children, and some of us may be the better and the wiser for it. If Ella and that gallant knight of hers survive, how happy they will be! It makes me happy even to think of it, though for aught we know the earth may open and swallow us all within the next five minutes."

"Yes, the dear child! Thank God for her sake!"

"For your own too. There is Mara safe also. Poor Mrs. Hunter! she looks death-like to me. You look awfully too. I never saw you so pale and haggard."

"Cap'n Bodine, Marse Houghton send you dis," said Jube at his elbow, proffering a glass of wine.

The captain turned his startled eyes upon his old employer, who lay just out of earshot of their low tones.

"Take it, Hugh," said his cousin earnestly. "Drink to the death of hate. He and I have made up."

The veteran hesitated, and a spasm, as if from a wrench of pain, passed over his face. Then he took the glass, and said coldly, "I drink to your recovery, sir."

"I thank you," was Mr. Houghton's response.

"A very fair beginning, Hugh, for a man," his cousin resumed. "You might as well give up at once, though. Everything is going to be shaken down that shouldn't stand."

Ominous words to the veteran, for he felt that his dream of happiness was falling in ruins.

By the natural force of circumstances the several characters of our story had been brought comparatively near together, yet were separated into little groups. Dr. Devoe passed from one to the other as his services were needed, nor were they confined to those known to us. He simply made a little open space beside Mr. Houghton his headquarters, where he left his remedies under the charge of the invalid, Jube, and old Tobe. Other physicians had joined him and were indefatigable in the work of relief. Some of the city clergy were also in the square, speaking words of Christian faith and hope, which never before had seemed so precious.

To Clancy Dr. Devoe gave a good deal of attention. Not only was his hair singed, but his neck and hands were badly burned, and his swoon was so obstinate as to indicate great exhaustion. This could scarcely be otherwise, for he possessed no such physique as young Houghton had developed. Moreover, he had passed through a mental strain and excitement which no one could comprehend except Mara, and she but partially. Houghton had put his coat under the head of the unconscious man, and was doing his best for him. So also was Miss Ainsley now. She had purposely turned her back on Mara, and her face was toward the adjacent conflagration, which distinctly lighted up her face and form, transforming her into a vision of marvellous beauty. Her long hair had fallen in a golden veil over her bare shoulders and neck; her dark eyes were lustrous with excitement and full of solicitude. When at last Clancy opened his eyes his first impression was that an angel was ministering to him in a light too brilliant to be earthly. He recognized Miss Ainsley's voice, however, and when he had taken some of the wine which the doctor pressed to his lips, all that had happened came back to him. George now returned in solicitude to his father, also designing to take a little much-needed rest, while the doctor gave his attention

to other patients. With returning consciousness Clancy was overpowered by a deep sense of gratitude to this beautiful creature, and also by a strong feeling of compunction that he had sought the regard which she now seemed to bestow unstintedly. "Like Mara," he thought, "there is nothing left for me but to fulfil obligations from which I cannot honorably withdraw."

"You are indeed kind and devoted," he said feebly. "I fear I have made a good deal of trouble."

"No, Mr. Clancy, you have gone beyond your strength. In fact, we are all distracted and half beside ourselves. Won't you let me take your head into my lap? If I am caring for you I can better endure these awful scenes." And she made the change.

"I hope you will forgive me for leaving you so abruptly on the Battery. Mrs. Hunter and Miss Wallingford really had no one to look to."

"Captain Bodine evidently thinks Miss Wallingford should look to him."

"In such an emergency he would be even more helpless than she."

"Oh, well, I hope the worst is now over for us all, and that we can soon get away from this awful town."

He gave no answer. Miss Ainsley knew that her father was not far distant, and that he would come for her by the first train which could reach the city. Accustomed all her life to look at everything from the central point of self, she now, in the greater sense of safety, began to give some thought to the future. Her first conscious decision was to try to be as brave as possible, and so leave a good impression. The second was to get away from the city at once, and she hoped she might never see it again. If Clancy would go with her, if he would even eventually join her at the North, she believed that she could marry him, so favorable was the impression that he had made, but she felt that she was making a great concession, which he must duly appreciate. At present the one consuming wish was to escape,

to get away from scenes which to her were horrible in the last degree.

In truth only a brave spirit could witness what was taking place on every side, or maintain fortitude under the overwhelming impression of personal danger—an impression which soon banished the partial sense of security felt after reaching the square. The extent of the terror inspired by the earthquake can best be measured by the fact that although columns of smoke and fire, consuming homes and threatening to lay the city in ashes, were rising at several points, they were scarcely heeded. The roar of adjacent flames could even be heard by the vast concourse, but ears were strained to detect that more terrible roar that seemed to come from unknown depths beneath the ocean and the land, and to threaten a fate as awful and mysterious as itself. Even many of the white population could not help sharing in some degree the general belief among the negroes that the end of all things was at hand. The nervous shock sustained by all prepared the way for the wildest fears and conjectures. As in the instance of a bloody battle, those were the best off who were the most occupied.

Thousands, however, sat and waited in sickening apprehension, fearing some new horror with every passing moment. There was a sound of weeping throughout the square, while above this monotone rose groans, cries, hysterical screams, loud petitions for mercy, and snatches of hymns. The emotional negroes left no moments of silence. The majority of the white people had become comparatively calm. They talked in low tones, encouraging and soothing one another; the lips of even those who seldom looked heavenward now often moved in silent prayer; fathers, on whose brows rested a heavy load of care, tried to cheer their trembling families; and mothers clasped their sobbing children in their arms, with the feeling that even death should not part them.

Over all this array of pallid, haggard faces, shone the flames of the still unquenched conflagration.

CHAPTER XLIII

"THE TERROR BY NIGHT"

WHEN Aun' Sheba saw that Mara, Mrs. Hunter, and Clancy were among friends, with a physician in attendance, she sat down by her daughter Sissy, and took little Vilet in her lap.

"I kin'er feel," she said, "dat ef de yearth is gwine ter swaller us, I'se like ter go down wid dis chile. Vilet shuah to go up ag'in, an' p'raps de Lawd ud say, 'You kin come too, Aun' Sheba.'"

The sound of her voice so far restored Uncle Sheba to his normal condition that he was able to creep on his hands and knees to a position just behind his wife, where he crouched as if she were a sort of general protection.

Vilet, roused at her grandmother's voice, looked around, and then asked in her plaintive voice, "Whar's daddy?"

"He's hep'n' put'n' out de fiahs, deah chile."

"My bref gittin' bery sho't, granny. I can't stay dis side ob de riber much longer; I wants ter see daddy 'fore I go."

"Po' chile and po' Kern," groaned Aun' Sheba. "We doesn't know whar he be, an' I'se 'feerd he couldn't lebe off puttin' out de fiahs."

From time to time Vilet wailed, "Daddy, come, come quick. I'se gwine fas, an' I wants to see you onst mo'."

Captain Bodine heard the cry, and, having rested himself a little, came to Aun' Sheba and asked, "Do you know where Kern is?"

"I doan, Marse Cap'n, but he mought be at dis nighest fiah."

"I'll see," said the veteran, halting away with the feeling that he must do something to divert his torturing thoughts.

Watson was soon pointed out to him, where with stern and quiet face he was carrying out his orders. When told that Vilet was near and calling for him, the veins came out on his forehead, and for a moment he was irresolute. Then he cried, "No, sah, I can't go. Fo' de Lawd, ef she die an' we all die I won't lebe my duty."

"You're a man," said Bodine, clapping him on the shoulder, "I will arrange this."

He went direct to Kern's superior officer and briefly told him the circumstances, then added, "I know these people. Watson deserves consideration. I will take his place. I can hold the hose as well as he, and will stand as near the fire as he does if you will order him to go to his dying child for a few minutes."

"In that case I can comply," said the officer. "Watson has behaved splendidly, and he'll come back soon."

The first thing Kern knew, the hose was taken from his hand, and he ordered to go and return within ten minutes. He hesitated. "Obey orders," was the stern command. Then he rushed away.

The plaintive cry, "Daddy, daddy," guided him, and Vilet was in his arms.

"Chile, deah chile!" was all he could say as he kissed the thin face again and again.

"Now my min's at res'," said the little girl, with a sigh of ineffable content. "You 'member, daddy—you says—'Yes, Vilet.'—I'se a-goin', daddy. De angels—is all ready—to tote me to Heben. I kin jes' heah dere wings—rustlin' roun' me. I was jes' waitin'—an' hol'n back—ter see you onst mo'. Good-by, moder—granny."

Then she feebly wound her little arms about Kern's neck and whispered, "Good-by, daddy, fer jes' a lil while. I'se wait neah de gate fer you *shuah*."

It would seem that she put all her remaining strength

into this effort, for her head fell over on his shoulder; she quivered a moment, then was still. Kern could not repress one deep groan. He looked for a moment of agony into his child's face, kissed it, then placing her in Aun' Sheba's lap, departed as swiftly as he came. Sissy was so overcome as to be helpless.

"Your time wasn't up," said the veteran.

"Her time was up, Cap'n Bodine," Kern managed to reply, his face rigid with repressed emotion. "She die in my arms. God bless yo' fer you'se feelins fer a po' man."

"Watson, I do feel for you and with you. Our hearts are all breaking to-night. Take care of yourself. You have a wife and children still to live for." And Bodine halted back and seated himself by his cousin.

Alas! for thousands the words of Bodine were only too true. As they contemplated what had happened and what might occur at any moment, they felt that heavy, crushing pain, unlike all others, which gathers at the heart, overwhelming the spirit and threatening physical dissolution at one and the same time.

Yet such is the power of human affection and Christian faith, that they won many triumphs, even during that night of horrors. In Ella and the dying woman, whose head she pillowed on her breast, were examples of both. The girl's heart was indeed pitiful and sympathetic, and the poor creature knew that it was, for in broken, gasping words she told her brief, pathetic story, so like that of many other women in the South. Once she was a happy girl at home on a small plantation, but father, brothers, and lover had all perished in the war. Home and mother had since been lost and she was fighting out life's long, weary battle when this final disaster brought the end. "Yes, kind lady, I reckon I'm dying: I hope so. I couldn't take care of myself any longer, and I'd rather join those who have gone on before me than trust to the charity of this world. I am very weary, very heavy laden, and I'd rather go to Him who said, 'Come to Me.' If you can stay with me a little longer—I don't fear,

but it's very sweet to have human kindness and company down into the dark valley."

Her words proved true. She evidently perished from internal injuries, for she soon ceased to gasp, and her head lay still against the bosom of the sobbing girl.

Dr. Devoe was present during the last moments, then gently relieved Ella from her lifeless burden, and supported her to her father on whose shoulder she shed those natural tears which soon bring relief to the hearts of the young. George Houghton and Jube carried the body to the place set apart for the dead. Then George returned to his father's side, but looked wistfully at Ella with an unspeakable longing to comfort her.

"I don't wonder, my boy," said Mr. Houghton, interpreting his thoughts. "Go and speak to her."

George approached timidly, and said, "Miss Bodine."

She started, raised her head, and began to wipe her eyes.

"I—I— Well, I don't know what to say to make you understand how my father and I have sympathized with your brave— Well, you were so kind and patient with that poor woman. I wish I could do something for *you*, and I will," and he hastened away.

She called, "I don't need anything, Mr. Houghton. Indeed I do not. It would only distress me—" But he was out of hearing. "Oh," she moaned again on her father's shoulder, "why will he take risks?"

It was evident that Mr. Houghton shared her anxiety, for he divined his son's purpose, and looked with troubled face for his return. He soon came back carrying another mattress, pillows and blankets. Sam, compelled to leave the horses, followed with a basket of provisions. Ella was clothed in little besides a light wrapper, and had shivered more than once in the night air. George tried to induce her and Mrs. Bodine to accept of the mattress, but they asked as a favor that it might be placed under Mrs. Hunter. He readily complied, saying he would get another for them.

At this moment came the ominous groan of the severe

shock which occurred at about half-past two o'clock Wednesday morning. To the terrified people it was like the growl of some ravening beast rushing upon them, and a long wailing cry blended with the horrible roar as it swept under and over them, then died away in the northwest.

"Oh, Mr. Houghton," sobbed Ella, when her voice could be heard, "please don't go away—please don't go near a building again."

"George," added his father, almost sternly, "not with my consent will you leave me again till we learn more definitely what our fate is to be. If you were in the house when this shock occurred, you might have perished. It is no longer a question of more or less comfort."

"I reckon not," said Mrs. Bodine. "It's a question of ever seeing the sun rise again. We may as well speak out what is in our minds, and get ready for a city not made with hands."

"I wish we were all as ready to go as you are, Cousin Sophy," Ella whispered.

"Well, my dear, I've more property in that city than in this wrecked town, and 'where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'" Then she added, "You'll be spared, dear child. You and your knight will see many happy years. God bless you both."

"Oh, cousin! it is such a comfort, even at this awful time, to see him, to know he is near, to think he came for —for us!"

"For you, dear little goose. He'd face earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, cyclones, and even his father before this well-deserved shaking converted him, for your sake."

"Cousin," whispered the girl, "I'm so glad. Is it wrong to be glad at such a time?"

"Wrong to be glad when God loves you and a good man loves you? I reckon not. All the quakes that ever shook this crazy old earth are bagatelles compared with such facts."

"Oh, cousin, you are such a tower of strength and comfort!"

"I'm a leaning tower," replied the old lady, whose vein of humor ran through all her thoughts, "but I'm leaning on what won't fail me. Nestle down by my side, dear child. You are shivering, and this extra blanket will do us both good. Now be comfortable, and believe with me that nothing in the universe can or will harm you."

"Poor Mara!" Ella sighed.

"Yes, I've been watching and grieving over her. I never saw any face more expressive of suffering than hers. I don't understand her unless—unless—well, time will show, that is, if there is much more time for me."

"Oh, cousin, we never could spare you!"

"That is what I used to think about my husband, but he always went when sailing orders came, and I survived. I feel to-night as if he and the boys were just waiting off shore, if this tossing and pitching earth can be called shore, for me to join them."

Captain Bodine sat through the shock without moving a muscle. His eyes rested wistfully on Mara. With an indescribable pang he saw that in the supreme moment of general terror her eyes turned not to him but to Clancy, and that she made a half involuntary movement as if to go to him. The glance, the act, combined with what had gone before, were too significant, and Bodine buried his face in his hands that she might not see his trouble. She knew it all the more surely, yet felt how powerless she was to console him.

"Oh, my blind, blind folly!" she groaned inwardly. "If I had been true to my heart, I might be caring for Owen instead of that woman who left him to die, and my father's friend acting like a father toward us both. I wanted to be so heroic and self-sacrificing, and I've only sacrificed those I love most."

Mrs. Hunter was so fully under the influence of anodynes as not to be cognizant of what was taking place, and Bodine,

soldier-like, was not long in reaching his decision. Rising, he went aside with Dr. Devoe, and said, "Miss Wallingford is keeping up from the sheer force of will. Nothing but your command can induce her to yield and take such rest as can be obtained here. I do not think you can interpose too soon. I will watch Mrs. Hunter."

Mara had indeed reached the limit of endurance, and the physician quickly detected the fact. He took her by the hand and arm, and gently raised her to her feet as he said, "I am autocrat here. Even kings and generals must obey their doctor. So I shall ask no permission to place you beside Mrs. Bodine. She and rest can do you more good than I can. Captain Bodine and I will look after Mrs. Hunter."

Mara gave the veteran a grateful glance and yielded. Then she buried her face in Mrs. Bodine's neck, and was silent until she slept from physical exhaustion.

Miss Ainsley, with multitudes of others, yielded to her terror at the passing of the midnight earthquake. She shrieked and half rose in her wild impulse to fly. Then apparently forgetting Clancy she piteously begged Dr. Devoe to give her something that would certainly bring oblivion for a few hours at least. He good-naturedly complied. When the opiate began to take effect she was placed on the mattress beside Mrs. Hunter, and was soon in stupor. Clancy had so far recovered that he was able to sit up, and he felt that he should watch beside the girl who he believed had been so devoted to him in his unconsciousness.

Dr. Devoe in excuse for Miss Ainsley said, "We can't make too much allowance to-night for every one. Many strong men are utterly overcome and nauseated by these shocks. No wonder women cannot face them."

"I think Miss Ainsley has borne up wonderfully," Clancy replied.

"Oh, yes, as well as the average. It's a question of nerves with the majority."

Clancy sat down and looked with pity at the beautiful

face and dishevelled hair. "Poor girl!" he thought, "she did her best by me. Indeed, I had scarcely thought her capable of such devotion. By all that's honorable I'm bound to her now. Well, eventually I can give her a truer affection, for she has ceased to be merely a part of my ambitious scheme. By our own acts Mara and I are separated, and, however deep our grief may be, it must be hidden from all."

Thus he and Captain Bodine sat on either side of the pallet, each immersed in painful thought, oblivious of the strange scenes enacted all around them. They did not feel then that they could speak to each other.

The veteran was perplexed, and his proud spirit also labored under a deep sense of wrong. It was evident that he had been deceived by Mara, and that all along she had loved the man so near to him, loved him better than her own life. Why had she concealed the fact? Why had she been so cold and harsh toward Clancy himself until the awful events of the night and peril to life had overpowered her reserve and revealed her heart? He could think of no other explanation than that afforded by the unconscious girl over whom Clancy watched. He had heard of the young man's devotion to Miss Ainsley, and, from what he had seen, believed that they were affianced. He was too just and large in his judgment to think Mara's course toward him was due to pique and wounded pride, and he was not long in arriving at a very fair explanation of her motives and action. Keenly intelligent and mature in years he was beyond the period of passionate and inconsiderate resentment. Moreover his love for the orphan girl was so true, and the memory of her father and mother so dear to him, that he was able to rise nobly above mere self, and resolve to become the most loyal of friends, a protector against her very self. "Now I think of it," he mused, "she has never said she loved me, although she permitted me to think she did. Even when I declared my love she only said, 'Life offers me nothing better than to be your wife.' That no

doubt was true as she meant it, for she then thought this man here was lost to her. She did not welcome my love when she first recognized it, but soon her spirit of self-sacrifice came in, and she reasoned that since she could not be happy in herself, she would make me happy. From the very first I believed that this spirit could lead her to deception for the sake of others, and I have not been sufficiently on my guard against it. Yet how could I suspect this Clancy, whom she so repelled and contemned, and who was devoting himself to another woman? Perhaps she partially deceived herself as well as me. The affection probably struck root years since when she and Clancy were friends. He outgrew it; she has not, as she has learned to night, if not before. He went to her aid because he was friendly in spite of her apparent bitterness toward him, which perhaps he understood better than I. Possibly Mrs. Hunter may have broken their relations, for there is no doubt about her feelings. Well, time must unravel the snarl. It would now seem that he is devoted to this girl here, and she to him as far as she can be to any one. What he will think when he learns that she ran shrieking away and left him, while Mara, reckless of life itself, stood by him to the last, I cannot know. If he loves her he will forgive her, for no man can blame a woman for succumbing to the terror of this night. Possibly at some distant day Mara may still think that life offers her nothing better than to be my wife; but she shall be free, free as air, and know, too, that I know all."

Thus Bodine communed with himself after a habit learned long ago in the presence of danger.

Clancy also was confronted by possible results of his action, the fear of which enabled his cool, resolute nature to rise above all other fear. He resolved to go at once to Aun' Sheba, and caution her against speaking of the scenes in which she, with Mara, and himself had taken part.

CHAPTER XLIV

HOPE TURNED INTO DREAD

CLANCY was guided by the voice of Aun' Sheba, the wailing of Sissy, and the groans and unearthly sounds to which Uncle Sheba was giving utterance. The adjacent fire was so far subdued that only a red glow in the sky above marked the spot. The stars shone in calm, mocking serenity on the wide scene of human distress and fear. "Alas," he thought, "what atoms we are; and what an atom is this earth itself! It would seem that faith is the simplest, yet mightiest effort of the mind at such a time," and he paused till Aun' Sheba should be more free to listen to him.

Mr. Birdsall, with his youngest child in his arms, had been exhorting those of his people near him, but his words had been of little effect in quieting Sissy and Uncle Sheba. The latter had concluded that he would not wait till the coming winter before again " 'speriencin 'ligion," and his uncouth appeals to Heaven were but the abject expression of animal fear. Aun' Sheba had lost her patience with both him and her daughter, and was expostulating vigorously. "I'se asham on you, Sissy," she said. "Wot good de 'ligion you 'fess do you, I'd like ter know? Ain't Vilet in Hebin? Ain't you got de bes husban bawn? Ain't de oder chil'n heah? Now ef you'se 'ligion any good 'tall, be quiet an tankful dat you bettah off dan hun'erds. Unc., you kin pray all you wants, but ef you specs de Lawd ter listen you'se got ter pray like a man an not like a hog dat wants his dinnah. You'se 'sturbin everybody wuss dan you did wen you got sot on. I won hab it said my folks made

a rumpus in dis time ob trouble. You'se got ter min me, Mr. Buggone, or I'se hab you took out de squar."

Uncle Sheba was never so far gone in his fears but that he shrunk from facing anything worse, and so he subsided into low inarticulate groans. Sissy was not so tractable, for her weeping was largely nervous and hysterical. She had an affectionate emotional nature, but was far from being gifted with the strength of mind and character possessed by her mother and husband.

"Aun' Sheba," said Clancy kindly, "your daughter needs something to quiet her nerves. I will bring it to her." He soon returned with medicine from the doctor, and under its influence the bereaved mother became calmer and wept softly by her dead child.

Clancy drew Aun' Sheba a little apart so that others could not hear, even if any were disposed to listen at this time of intense preoccupation. "You have been a friend indeed to-night," he said. "I must ask another proof of your good-will. The earthquake has brought trouble enough, but I fear that Mara and I have brought greater trouble upon ourselves. Probably you've seen enough to explain what I mean."

"I'se seen a heap, Marse Clancy."

"Well, you are Mara's old nurse. She loves and trusts you. She is engaged to Captain Bodine."

"She ain't mar'ed to 'im."

"She feels herself bound, and has said that if I was a true Southern gentleman I would not interfere. This is bad enough, but there's worse still. I thought she was lost to me—you know about it, I reckon."

"Yes, I knows now. I was a blin ole fool an tink it was wuckin' so hard dat made her po'ly."

"Oh, we have both made such fatal mistakes! I, like a fool, when I believed she would never speak to me again, entangled myself also. Now, Aun' Sheba, what I wish is that you say nothing to any one of what you have seen and heard. We've got to do what's honorable at every cost to ourselves."

"Dus wot's hon'ble mean dat Missy Mara got ter mar'y Marse Bodine an you de limpsey-slimpsey one wot say you 'serted her?"

"Nothing else seems to be left for us."

"'Pears ter me, Marse Clancy, you an Missy Mara gittin orful muxed up in wot's hon'ble. I'se only got wot folks calls hoss-sense, but it's dead agin you bofe. Take you now. Fust you got ter tell de gal lies, den lies to her fader an de minister wot jines you, and de hull worl. Missy Mara ud hab ter lie like de debil, too, an you bofe go on lyin 'miscuously. Anyhow, you'se hab ter act out de lies ef you didn't say 'em. 'Ud dat be hon'ble wen all de time you'se yearnin fer each oder?"

"Oh, Aun' Sheba, it's hard enough without such words as yours!"

"Ob corse it's hard. It orter be, fer it's agin de Lawd an natur. Marse Clancy, took keer wot you do, an wot you let Missy Mara do. My 'sperience teach me a heap. S'pose I doan' know de dif'ence 'tween Unc. dar an a man like Kern? I was young an foolish onct, an mar'ed Unc. kase he was good lookin den, an mo' kase he ax me. Well, I'se made de bes on it, an I'se gwine ter make de bes on it; but if de yearth crack right open heah, as like 'nuff 'twill 'fo' mawnin, I'd jump right down in de crack 'fo' I'd do it ober ag'in. You'se on de safe side ob de crack yit, so be keerful. I knows woman folks soon as I claps my eyes on dem. Miss Mara quar in her notions 'bout de Norf—she was brung up to 'em—but dere's nuff woman in my honey lam' to make a tousan ob dis yere limpsey-slimpsey one."

Clancy clinched his hands in mental distress as he listened to the hard sense and unerring judgment of the sagacious old woman.

"I'm in terrible perplexity," he said, "for there is so much truth in your words. How can I escape the consequences of my own acts? Think how Miss Ainsley stood by me in my unconsciousness! When I revived—"

"Dar now, Marse Clancy, you'se been fooled. She stood

by hersef. De fac am, she didn't stan 'tall, but run like a deer, hollerin fer all she's wuth. Wen you swoonded, Missy Mara cotch you in her arms. I eben run away, an lef my honey lam' mysef, but I come back sudden, an dar she was a hol'n you head in her lap right uner a big bildin dat ud a squashed her. I drag you pass dat, an den Marse Bodine jes ordered me an Missy to go to de squar. He spoke stern an strong as if we his sogers. An Missy Mara look 'im in de eyes an say, you—dat's you, Marse Clancy—may be dead, or you may be dyin, an dat she can't leab you an she won leab you. She got de grit ob true lub, an dere'll neber be any runin away in her heart. Wot you an Marse Bodine gwine ter do 'bout sich lub as dat? 'Fo' de Lawd my honey lam' die ef you an Marse Bodine 'sist on bein so orful hon'ble. She ain't one dem kin' dat takes a husban like dey takes a breakfas kase its ready."

Clancy was so profoundly moved by what he heard that he turned away to hide his emotion. After a moment he said: "You have been true and faithful, Aun' Sheba. You won't be sorry. Please do as I have asked." And he hastened away.

"Reckon I put a spoke in dat hon'ble bizness," Aun' Sheba soliloquized. "Like 'nuff I put another in. Doan cotch me hep'n along any sich foolishness. I gibs no promise, an I'se gwine ter make my honey lam' happy spite hersef." Then she took one of her grandchildren, and soothed it to sleep.

The slow hours dragged wearily on; the majority of the white people quieted down to patient, yet fearful waiting; crying children, one after another, dropped off to sleep; parents and friends watched over them and one another, conversing in low tones or praying silently for the Divine mercy, never before felt to be so essential. The negroes were more demonstrative, and their loud prayers and singing of hymns continued without abatement or hindrance. The expressions of some were so extravagant and uncouth as to grate harshly on all natures possessing any refinement;

but when such men as Mr. Birdsall exhorted or prayed, there were but few among the whites who did not listen reverently, and in their hearts acknowledge the substantial truth of the words spoken and their need of the petitions offered.

Clancy went back to his watch. Few men in the city were more troubled and perplexed than he, for he had not the calmness resulting from a definite purpose as was true of Bodine.

Unmovedly the two men remained at their posts of duty awaiting the day or what might happen before the dawn. George lay down beside his father, and soon slept from fatigue, while Mr. Houghton, now so softened and chastened, vowed to make him happy.

Ella watched her father in deep solicitude, feeling vaguely that his trouble was not caused wholly by the general reasons for distress. At last she stole to his side, and laid her head upon his shoulder. The act comforted and sustained him more than she knew at the time, for he was not a demonstrative man. He only kissed her tenderly and bade her return to her cousin, with whom she kept up a whispered and fragmentary conversation. Mrs. Willoughby sat beside her husband, her head pillowed against his breast as they waited for the day.

A breeze sprang up, and the freshness of the morning was in it. Would the sun ever rise again? Was not Nature so out of joint that nothing familiar could be looked for any more? The terrors of the long night inspired morbid thoughts, which come too readily in darkness.

At the appointed time, however, there was a glow in the east, which steadily deepened in color. Truly, to the weary, haggard, shivering, half-clad watchers, the sun was an angel of light that morning; and never did fire-worshippers greet his rise with a deeper feeling of gratitude and gladness.

There was a general stir in the strange bivouac, an increased murmur of voices. The hymns of the negroes gradually ceased; and people, singly or in groups, began to

leave the square for their homes, in order to clothe themselves more fully, and to discover what was left to them in the general wreck.

There had been no shock since the convulsion at half-past two o'clock, the fact inspiring general confidence that the worst was over. Hope grew stronger with the blessed light, and fear vanished with the darkness.

Mr. Houghton touched his son, who immediately awoke, meditating deeds of hospitality. "Father," he said, "our house is near. Cannot I, with the aid of Jube and Sam, get our friends some breakfast?"

"Yes, George, and extend the invitation from me."

"Oh, father! I'm so grateful that you are giving me this chance to—to—"

"You shall have all the chance you wish. In fact, I'm rather inclined to see what I can do myself. I may need a good deal of nursing." And the old man's face was lighted up with a kindly smile, which made his son positively happy.

Approaching Bodine, he asked, "Do you think it will be safe for the invalids to leave the square?"

"I scarcely think so," was the reply. "At least, not until more time passes without disturbance. From what I've read of earthquakes, our houses may be unsafe for days to come."

"Well, the first thing to be done is to see that you all have some breakfast. Fortunately, our house is not far; and, although our women-servants have fled, I have two men who will stand by me. The fact is, my hunting expeditions have made me a fairly good cook myself. My father cordially extends the invitation that all my friends here breakfast with us."

"I will join in your labors, Houghton," said Clancy, promptly. "Having no home, I gratefully accept your father's invitation."

"We're all shipwrecked on a desert island," added Mrs. Bodine cheerily to George. "You appear to be one of the friendly natives, and I put myself under your protection."

"Our custom here is," replied the young fellow in like vein, "that, after we have taken salt together, we become fast friends."

"Bring on the salt, then," she answered laughing, while Ella's smile seemed to the young fellow more vivifying than the first level rays of the sun. Mara, Mrs. Hunter, and Miss Ainsley were still sleeping, as also was Dr. Devoe.

"Houghton," called Mr. Willoughby, "won't you enroll me as one of your cooks or waiters?"

"No," replied George, "I must leave you and Captain Bodine in charge of camp."

"Too many cooks spile de brof," said Aun' Sheba, rising from Mara's side where she had been watching for the last hour. "Marse Houghton, you bery fine cook fer de woods, I spec, but I reckon I kin gib a lil extra tech to de doin's."

"Ah, Aun' Sheba, if you'll come, you shall be chief cook, and I, for one, promise to obey. Mrs. Willoughby, I'm so very glad that I can now return a little of your kindness."

"I take back what I said about absolving you," she whispered.

"You'd better. If I don't make the most of my chance now my name is not George Houghton. Of course I shan't say anything while these troubles last. You understand, I don't wish anything to happen which would embarrass her, or make it hard to accept what I can do for her and hers; but when the right time comes," and he nodded significantly

"You are on the right tack as you boatmen say," she whispered laughing.

"See here, Houghton," remarked jolly Mr. Willoughby, "earthquakes and secret conferences with my wife are more than a fellow can stand at one and the same time."

"You shall soon have consolation," said George, hastening away, followed by Clancy, Aun' Sheba, Jube, and Sam. When the last-named worthy appeared near Mr. Houghton's barn the horses whinnied and the two dogs barked joyously.

"Mr. Clancy," said George, handing him his pocket-

book, "since you have kindly offered to aid, please take Jube and visit the nearest butcher's shop and bakery. I suggest that you lay in a large supply, for we don't know what may happen. Please get eggs, canned delicacies, anything you think best. Don't spare money. Help yourself, if owners are absent. I will honor all your I. O. U's."

"All right, Houghton; but remember that I'm an active partner in this catering business. Fortunately I don't need to go to the bank for money."

Aun' Sheba exclaimed over the evidences of disaster along the street, but when she saw what a wreck Mr. Houghton's massive portico had become she lifted her hands in dismay.

"That don't trouble me," said George, "since I'm not under it. I passed beneath a second or two before it fell."

"De Lawd be praised! 'Pears ter me He know wot He 'bout, an is gwine ter bring down pride ez well ez piazzers."

"It looks that way, Aun' Sheba. Here, Sam, make the kitchen fire before you do anything else. Now we must rummage and see what we can find."

Aun' Sheba took possession of the kitchen, and with broom, mop, and cloths, soon brought order out of chaos. Sam found that although the chimney had lost its top, it fortunately drew, and the fire in the range speedily proved all that could be desired. George ravaged the store-closet until Aun' Sheba said, "Nuff heah already ter feed de squar."

Then he went up and looked about the poor wrecked home, meanwhile setting Sam to dusting chairs and carrying them to the square. Then a table, crockery, knives, forks, spoons, napkins, etc., were despatched.

Clancy and Jube found that the proprietors of some of the shops were plucking up courage to enter them and resume trade, and so they eventually returned well laden with provisions. Then Jube was sent with wash-basins, water and towels for ablutions. Meantime George and Clancy took a hasty bath and exchanged their ruined clothing for clean apparel.

"Houghton, you are a godsend to us all," exclaimed his friend.

"I suppose the whole affair is a godsend," was the reply; "anyway, I'm getting my satisfaction out of it this morning."

As sprightly Mrs. Willoughby saw the applicances for their comfort following one after another she said to Ella, "We may as well make believe that it is a picnic."

Ella smiled and replied, "I'm better dressed for breakfast than you are, for I have on a wrapper, and you are in a low-necked evening costume."

"I feel as if I could eat a breakfast all the same. What creatures these mortals be! A little while ago I was in the depths of misery, and now I'm hungry and kind of happy."

"Oh, you are," said her husband, "when you may have to take in washing for a living, while I shovel brick and mortar."

"No, indeed," cried his wife, "I'll join the firm of Wallingford and Bodine, and you can help Aun' Sheba peddle cakes."

"That's right, children," said Mrs. Bodine, "that's the true brave Southern spirit. We are all born soldiers, seamen rather, since the land has been as freakish as the waves. Now mind, I'll send the first one below who shows the white feather."

Mr. Houghton lay apart from this group; and, while he felt his isolation, knew that he was to blame for it. They also felt the awkwardness of their situation, not knowing how far he was willing or able to converse with them. Mr. Willoughby was about to break the ice, but Ella forestalled him. "Mr. Houghton," she said, timidly approaching, "is there anything we can do for you? We are all so grateful."

"Yes, Miss Bodine. Forget and forgive."

"There seems very little now to forgive, and we do not wish to forget your kindness."

"Good Lor!" whispered Mrs. Bodine to Mrs. Willoughby, "I couldn't have turned a neater sentence myself."

"Well, Miss Bodine," resumed Mr. Houghton, "I suppose we shall have to let bygones be bygones. Now that sunshine and brightness have come, we should not recall anything painful. I trust that the worst is over, but our courage may yet be sorely tried. I will esteem it a very great favor if you and your friends will accept without reluctance what my son can do for your comfort."

Ella could not repress a little laugh of pleasure as she replied, "It is too late now to affect any reluctance. We owe him so much that we might as well owe him more." Then, ever practical, she arranged a screen to shade his face from the sun's rays.

Mr. Willoughby now came up and spoke in a friendly way of the probable effects of the disaster upon the city, and so the touch of mutual kindness began to make them kin.

Mrs. Hunter commenced to moan and toss, and this awakened Miss Ainsley, who looked around wonderingly. Mrs. Willoughby in low tones recalled what had happened, and explained the present aspect of affairs. Mrs. Bodine performed the same office for Mara, who also had been aroused by the voices near. The girl's habit of self-control served her in good stead, and she immediately rose, gave her hand to Bodine in greeting, and then knelt beside her aunt. Seeing Mara so near, Miss Ainsley quickly rose also, and moved away in instinctive antipathy.

Mrs. Hunter was feverish and evidently very ill. She was unable to comprehend what was taking place, but recognized Mara, whose soothing touch and words alone had the power of quieting her.

Ella bathed Mrs. Bodine's face and hands, and enabled her to make "the ghost of a toilet," as the old lady said. Then Ella whispered, "I wish I could do as much for Mr. Houghton."

"I dare you to do it," said Mrs. Bodine, with a mirthful gleam in her eyes.

Ella caught her spirit, and without hesitation, although blushing like a rose, went to Mr. Houghton, and asked,

"Will you please let me bathe your hands and face also?"

"Why, Miss Bodine, I should not expect such kindness from you. I can wait till my son returns."

"He is doing so much that he will be tired. It would give me pleasure if you will permit it. In waiting on my cousin I've learned to be not a very awkward nurse."

"Well, Miss Bodine, I am learning that even earthquakes can bring pleasant compensations. You shall have your own way. Yes, you are a good nurse, and a brave and patient one. Your kindness to that poor creature who died in your arms touched my heart."

"And mine too, Mr. Houghton. She told me a very pitiful story."

"You shall tell it to me some time, my dear."

Her heart thrilled as he gently spoke these words, while George, striding up with a great platter of steak, almost dropped it as he saw the girl waiting on his father as if filial relations were already established. The old man enjoyed his look of pleased wonder, and, when he had a chance, whispered, "I'm getting ahead of you, my boy, I don't want your clumsy hands or Jube's around me any more." Mrs. Bodine put her head under the blanket and shook with silent laughter.

Ella was very shy of the young man, however. He could not catch her eye, nor get a chance to speak to her except in the presence of her father, Mrs. Bodine, or some one else. But he possessed his soul in patience, and did his best to be a genial host. Clancy, Jube, and Sam followed with the coffee and various comestibles. Miss Ainsley was a little effusive in her greeting of the man whom she had deserted in the street, and again had left to pass the night as he could, while she sought oblivion. His response was grave, kind, yet not altogether reassuring. He certainly indulged in no lover-like glances; and he went direct to Mara, and inquired gently after Mrs. Hunter. She replied quietly, without looking up. It was evident that

the sound of his voice distressed the injured woman, who was barely conscious enough to have vague memories of the past.

Weary Dr. Devoe was wakened, while George gave Mrs. Willoughby his arm, and gallantly placed her behind the coffee-urn. Even Captain Bodine assumed a measure of cheerfulness during breakfast. When newsboys came galloping up with the morning paper, Mr. Willoughby rose and waved his hat, joining in the general hurrah which rose from all parts of the square. Every one warmly appreciated the heroism displayed in gathering news and printing a journal during the past night. Next to the vivifying light and the apparent cessation of the shocks, nothing did more to restore confidence than the appearance of the familiar paper.

"Old Charleston is alive yet," cried Mr. Willoughby; "and if the rest of us have half the pluck shown in that printing-house, we'll soon restore everything."

"Give me a paper," said Mrs. Bodine. "I'd rather have it than my breakfast."

"You shall have both," replied Ella, bringing a little tray to her side.

"Ah, Cousin Hugh, you veterans never did anything braver. Own up."

"I do, most sincerely and heartily."

Clancy read the journal aloud; and the coffee grew cold as all listened breathlessly to a chapter in the city's history never to be forgotten. Mr. Houghton was so absorbed that he suddenly became conscious that Ella was beside him with the daintiest of breakfasts. "You are spoiling me for any other nurse," he said.

"It is a relief at such a time to care for those who are ill and feeble," she replied gently. "If we have to stay here, I hope you will let me wait on you; but I trust that we can all soon go to our homes."

"I have my doubts. Now give me the pleasure of seeing you make a good meal."

"Mr. Clancy," cried Mrs. Willoughby, "in the general chaos women may obtain their just pre-eminence. I shall take the lead by ordering you to lay down that paper, so that you and others may have a hot breakfast."

Mara could be induced to take nothing beyond a cup of coffee. In spite of the sunshine and the general reaction into hopefulness and courage, she felt that black chaos was coming into her life. Her aunt and natural protector was very ill. After the events of the night she shrank inexpressibly from her former relations to Bodine. Indeed, it seemed impossible to continue them. Yet she asked herself again and again, "What else is there for me?" He was very kind, but the expression of his face was inscrutable. Moreover, there was Miss Ainsley acting as if Clancy were her own natural property, and he unable to dispute her claims. It appeared to her that poor stricken Mrs. Hunter was her only refuge, and she resolved to remain close by the invalid's side.

With the coming of the day Uncle Sheba's most poignant fears had gradually subsided. He kept his eyes on his wife, feeling that any good that he might hope for in this world would come through her. Indeed the impression was growing that the greatest immediate good to be obtained from any world was a breakfast; and when Aun' Sheba went with George to his home, Unc. also followed at a discreet distance. The result was that his wife again had to put him on a "'lowance," or little would have been left in Mr. Houghton's kitchen. He surreptitiously stuffed a few eatables into his pocket, and then went out to smoke his pipe.

Breakfast was at last over at the square. Mr. Willoughly rose and said to his wife, "I will go to the house, and get more suitable costumes for you and Carrie. Houghton will loan you a dressing-room at his house, for the streets can be scarcely suitable for you to traverse yet. I'll bring a carriage for you, however, as soon as it is possible. Serious danger is now over, I hope."

He had scarcely uttered the words when, as if in mockery, far in the southeast was heard again the sound which appalled the stoutest hearts. On it came, as if a lightning express-train were thundering down upon them. They saw the tops of distant trees nod and sway as if agitated by a gale; men, women, and children rushing again, with loud cries, from their homes; then it seemed as if some subterranean monster was tearing its way through the earth.

The moment the paralysis of terror passed, Miss Ainsley threw herself shrieking upon Clancy, who was compelled to support and soothe her. Mara covered her face with her hands, trembled violently, but uttered no sound. Ella could not repress a cry, as she hid her face upon her father's breast, a cry echoed by Mrs. Willoughby as she and her husband clung together. George knelt, holding the hand of his father, who looked at his son with the feeling that, if the end had come, his boy should be the last object on which his eyes rested. Mrs. Bodine was as composed as the veteran himself, and simply looked heavenward. There was something so terrific in the immeasurable power of the convulsion, so suggestive of immediate and awful death, that few indeed could maintain any degree of fortitude.

There was one, however, a few rods away, who scarcely noticed the shock. Kern Watson, at last released from duty, sat on the ground, with his face buried in the neck of his dead child. He did not raise his head, and trembled only as the quivering earth agitated his form.

CHAPTER XLV

A CITY ENCAMPING

THE earthquake which occurred at 8.25 Wednesday morning had a disastrous effect, although it was not so severe as to injure materially the buildings already so shattered. It nipped hope and growing confidence in the bud. Multitudes had left the square for their homes, a large proportion with the immediate purpose of obtaining more clothing. Many would have been comparatively naked were it not for enveloping blankets and the loan of articles of apparel from the more fortunate. With the confidence which the morning and the continued quiet of the earth inspired there had been a general movement from the square. Some hastily dressed themselves, snatched up bedding and food, and returned to the open spaces immediately; others breakfasted at home, and some had the heart to begin the task of putting their houses in order. The shock drove them forth again with all their fears renewed and increased, for the homes, which in many cases had been a refuge for generations, were now looked upon as death-traps, threatening to mangle and torture as well as destroy. The love of gain, the instinct to preserve property, was also obliterated. Merchants deserted their shops and warehouses. Banks were unopened, except for the gaps rent by the earthquake. The city was full of food, yet people went hungry, not daring to enter the places where it was stored. After a second and general flight to the square, the question in all hearts, "What next?" paralyzed with its dread suggestion.

The fear among the educated had become definite and rational. Not that they could explain the earthquake or its causes, but the sad experiences of other regions were known to them. These experiences, however, had varied so greatly in their horrors as to leave a wide margin of terrible possibilities. A tidal wave might roll in, for the city was scarcely more than nine feet above the sea. The earth might open in great and ingulfing fissures. The tremendous forces beneath them might seek a volcanic outlet. These were all dire thoughts, and were brought home to the consciousness the more vividly because the awful phenomena continued in the serene light of day. The nightmare aspect of what had occurred in darkness passed away, and the coolest and most learned found themselves confronted by dangers which they could not gauge or explain. Nor could the end be foreseen. If such considerations weighed down the spirits of the most intelligent men, imagine the fears of frail, nervous women, of the children, the wild panic of the superstitious negroes to whom science explained nothing. To their excited minds the earthquake was due directly either to the action of a malignant, personal devil, or of an angry God. While many of the poor ignorant creatures inevitably indulged in what were justly termed "religious orgies," the great majority were well behaved and patient, finding in their simple faith unspeakable comfort and support.

One fact, however, was clear to all: that the place of immediate and greatest danger was near or beneath anything which might be prostrated by the recurring shocks.

Another feature in Wednesday's experience was very depressing. The city was completely isolated from the rest of the world. All telegraph-wires were down, all railroads leading into the city had been rendered impassable. For many hours those without who had friends and relatives in Charleston were kept in dreadful suspense. From adjacent cities reports of the catastrophe were flashed continuously, but in regard to Charleston there was an ominous lack of

information, and the fear was very general that the city by the sea had sunk beneath the waves.

Mr. Ainsley shared in this horrible dread. He telegraphed repeatedly from an inland town, and took the first train despatched toward the city. His daughter was right in believing that he would reach her at the earliest possible moment.

She was greatly demoralized by the shock which dissipated her impression of comparative safety; and when she realized that the city was utterly cut off from the outside world, that it was impossible to know when her father could arrive, she gave way to selfish fear and the deepest dejection. With embarrassing pertinacity she insisted that Clancy should remain near her. Even to the others it was apparent that fear, rather than affection, led her to desire his presence so earnestly. He had once wondered what kind of a woman was masked by her culture and a reserve so perfect that it had seemed frankness. The veneer now was stripped off. After her own fashion, she was almost as abject in her terror as Uncle Sheba, who had run howling back to the square, leaving the wife who had fed him to her fate. In her lack of honest sympathy for others, and indisposition to exert herself in their behalf, Miss Ainsley quite equalled the selfish old negro. The conventional world in which she had shone to such advantage had passed away. Her very perfection in form and feature made defects in character more glaring, for she was seen to be a fair yet broken promise.

How sweetly the noble qualities of Ella and Mara were revealed by comparison! They had been taught in the school of adversity. From childhood they had learned to think of others first rather than of themselves. Miss Ainsley would have been resplendent and at ease in a royal drawing-room; these two girls maintained womanly fortitude and gave themselves up to unselfish devotion in the presence of a mysterious power which would level an emperor's palace as readily as a negro's cabin.

Clancy saw the difference—no one more clearly—and his very soul recoiled from the woman he had purposed to marry. He patiently bore with her as long as he could after the shock, and then joined Mr. Willoughby, George, Bodine, and Dr. Devoe, who were consulting at Mr. Houghton's bedside. In his shame and distress he did not venture even to glance at Mara.

As the stress of the emergency increased Mr. Houghton's mind had grown clear and decided; his old resolute, business habits asserted themselves, and from his low couch he practically became the leader in their council. "From what we know of other and like disturbances," he said, "it is impossible to foresee when these shocks will end, or how soon a refuge can be sought in regions exempt from our dangers. Now that I am established in this square near my home I intend to remain here for the present. I cordially ask you all to share my fortunes. My son will spare no expense or effort, that can be made in safety, for our general comfort." Then he added before them all, "Captain Bodine, I have done you much wrong and discourtesy. I apologize. You have invalid and injured ladies in your charge. Their claims are sacred and imperative. I will esteem it a favor if you will permit my son to do what he can for their comfort and protection."

Bodine at once came forward, and giving Mr. Houghton his hand, replied, "You and your son are teaching me that I have done you both much greater wrong. I think I shall have to surrender as I did once before, but I am glad that it is to kindness rather than to force in this instance."

"Here's the true remedy for our differences," cried Mr. Willoughby. "Let the North and South get acquainted, and all will be well. But come, we must act, and act promptly."

"Yes," replied George, "for the square is filling up again, and we should keep as much space here as possible. I have a small tent which I will put up at once for Mrs. Bodine and Mrs. Hunter. Then I'll rig an awning for my

father, and help the rest of you in whatever you decide upon."

"George," said his father, anxiously, "let your visits to the house be as brief as possible."

Clancy offered to assist George in meeting the immediate need of shelter from the sun, and Dr. Devoe gave the morning to the care of his many patients. Mr. Willoughby said that he must first go to his home for clothing and to look after matters, but that he would soon return. Bodine was asked to mount guard and prevent, as far as possible, the fugitives from encroaching on the needed space. This proved no easy task. Old Tobe, after having received some breakfast, maintained his watch over the medical stores, while Aun' Sheba, who had followed her husband as fast as her limited powers of travelling permitted, cleared away the remnants of the breakfast for her family, George assuring her that he would soon make all comfortable provision for her and them.

With Clancy and the two colored men he repaired to his home, as the wrecked venture to a ship which may break up at any moment, in order to secure what was absolutely essential. A tent was soon pitched for the invalids; a shelter of quilts suspended over and around his father, and a large carpet jerked from the floor formed an awning for the ladies. Part of this awning was partitioned off so as to give them all the privacy possible under the circumstances, and the remainder was inclosed on three sides, but left open toward the east.

"I'm not going to be sent to the hospital," said Mrs. Bodine. "I'd rather sit up and direct Ella how to transform this outer habitation into a drawing-room."

Then George brought her and his father easy-chairs. Rugs were spread on the grass, and the rude shelter became positively inviting. Ella and Mrs. Willoughby made themselves so useful that at last Miss Ainsley so far recovered from her panic as to assist. She detested Mara, and Mrs. Hunter's ghastly face and white hair embodied to her mind

the terror of which all were in dread. The bright sunshine and homely work were suggestive of rural pleasures rather than of dire necessity, and helped, for the time, to retire the spectre of danger to the background. The coming and going of many acquaintances and friends also helped to rally her spirits, and incite her to the semblance of courage. Mrs. Willoughby, Mrs. Bodine, and Mara had stanch friends who sought them out the moment comparative safety had been secured for their nearer dependants. The demands of our story require nothing more than the brief statement that there was a general disposition on the part of the people to think of and care for all who had claims upon them. Even in the dreadful hours immediately following the first shock, much unselfish heroism was displayed; and during the weary days and nights which followed, men and women vied with each other in their attentions to those who most needed care.

Mrs. Bodine, Mrs. Willoughby, and the captain had several whispered conferences with those who felt surprise at associations with Mr. Houghton, and there was a quick, generous response to the old man's kindness. Some who would not have looked at him the day before now went and spoke to him gratefully and sympathetically, while for George only cordiality and admiration were manifested. He was not a little uneasy over the profuse attentions and offers of help which Ella received from several young men. To his jealous eyes she appeared unnecessarily gracious, and more ready to talk with them than with him; but he could not discover that she had an especial favorite among them. Indeed, she managed in their case as in his that Mrs. Willoughby, Miss Ainsley, or some one else should share in the conversation.

At last Bodine said to George, "I will now go to Mrs. Hunter's rooms and to Mrs. Bodine's residence, and obtain what is most essential. Can you spare one of your servants to carry what I cannot?"

"Certainly, and I will go with you myself. Clancy and Sam can continue operations here."

"George," said his father, "as soon as the absolute necessity for entering buildings is over, I wish you to keep away from them."

"Yes, father."

Ella added, "Remember, Mr. Houghton, that is a promise. Please let the words 'absolute necessity' have their full meaning;" and her face was so full of solicitude that he said, "I promise you also."

With a smile and flush she turned to her father whispering the tenderest cautions and emphasizing the truth that but few things were essential, some of which she mentioned. Jube had become like a faithful spaniel, the spirit of his young master reassuring him so as to feel his only safety lay in obedience.

As George and Bodine went down the street they were saddened by the evidences of disaster on every side. Even Meeting Street was still so obstructed as to be almost impassable for vehicles, and in some places the ruins were still being searched for the dead. When they reached Mrs. Hunter's home Bodine groaned inwardly, "How the poor girl must have suffered!" He added aloud, "The mental distress caused by my helplessness during the last few hours, Mr. Houghton, has been much harder to bear than the wound which cost me my leg and the suffering which followed."

"My dear captain," replied George, "your courage and clear head make you far less helpless than hundreds who only use their legs to run with. Let me enter this shell of a house alone."

"That would be a sad commentary on your remark."

They speedily obtained what they deemed essential, and turned off the gas, which was still burning. It was evident that no one had entered the house since its occupants had left it. Mrs. Bodine's residence was comparatively uninjured, and when leaving it the captain was able to lock the outer door.

On their way back to the square George stammered:

"Captain Bodine, it may be very bad taste to speak of such a matter now, but we do not know what an hour will bring forth. I would like to have some understanding with you. Beyond that there may be no need of anything further being said until all these troubles are over. I—I—well, can I venture to make my former request? Your daughter has my happiness wholly in her hands. I do not intend to embarrass her by a word until she is again in her own home, but I wish to know that my hopes and efforts to win her regard have your sanction."

"How does your father feel about this?" Bodine asked gravely.

"He has given his full and cordial approval. Now that he has seen Miss Bodine she has won him completely."

"Mr. Houghton, I owe to you her life which I value more than my own. You know we are lacking in everything except pride and good name."

"My dear sir," interrupted George earnestly, "God has endowed your daughter as man could not. You know I love and honor her for herself and always shall."

"You are right," said the father proudly, "and you are so truly a man, as well as a gentleman, that you estimate my penniless daughter at her intrinsic worth. As far as my approval and good wishes are concerned you have them."

Ella thought that George's face was wonderfully radiant when he appeared. As soon as she could get a word alone with her father, she asked, "What have you been saying to Mr. Houghton?"

"I have only answered his second request that he might pay you his addresses."

"Oh, papa! what a tantalizing answer! What did he say, and what did you say, word for word? Surely you didn't tell—"

"I only gave my consent, not yours. You are at perfect liberty to reject him," was the smiling reply.

"That is well as far as it goes, but I wish to know every word."

Her father's heart was too heavy to permit continuance in a playful vein, and he told her substantially what had been said. "Well," she concluded, with a complacent little nod, "I think I'll let him pay his addresses a while longer. The absurd fellow to go and idealize me so! Time will cure such folly, however. Papa, there's something troubling you besides the earthquake."

"Yes, Ella, and you must help me—you and Cousin Sophy." Then he told her how he thought matters stood between Mara and Clancy, checked her first indignant words, explained and insisted until she promised that she and Mrs. Bodine would shield Mara, and act as if she were as free as she had ever been. "It will all come about yet, papa," Ella whispered, "for Mr. Clancy has evidently committed himself to Miss Ainsley, although now I reckon he regrets it."

"Well, Ella dear, redouble your kindness and gentleness to Mara, and let matters over which we have no control take their course."

Clancy had not been idle during the morning, finding in constant occupation, and even in the incurring of risks, a relief to his perturbed thoughts. He and Sam procured a small cooking-stove, and also set up the cross-sticks of a gypsy camp before the open side of the awning. Aun' Sheba was placed in charge of the provisions, a responsibility in which Uncle Sheba wished to share, but she said severely, "Mr. Buggone, you'se dun git yer lowance wid Sissy an' de chil'n."

Mr. Willoughby at last returned on an express-wagon, well loaded with articles which would add much comfort in the enforced picnic. His face was sad and troubled as he greeted his wife.

"Oh, Jennie," he said, "our pretty home is such a wreck!"

"No matter, Hal, since you are safe and sound," was her cheery reply. "Come, girls, we can now dress for dinner. I feel like a fool in this light silk."

They all eventually reappeared in costumes more suitable for camping.

Mrs. Bodine was also enabled to exchange her blanket wrapper for the one she was accustomed to wear at home. With almost the zest of a girl she appreciated the picturesque elements of their experiences; and her high spirits and courage were infectious. With the aid of Sam and Jube, Aun' Sheba entered vigorously on preparations for dinner; a breeze with passing clouds tempered the sun's hot rays; and hope again began to cheer as time passed without further disturbance.

CHAPTER XLVI

"ON JORDAN'S BANKS WE STAN'"

AUN' SHEBA had succeeded fairly well with the dinner, considering the materials and the appliances available. Not one, however, was disposed to epicurean fastidiousness. The situation was gravely discussed, and the experiences of friends related. Dr. Devoe gave cheering assurances that injury to life and limb had been far less than might have been expected. "The first shock could scarcely have come at a better time," he said. "If it had happened when the streets were full of people, one shudders to think of the number that would have been killed or maimed. The fact is, the great majority of casualties appear to have occurred as people were leaving their houses."

Mrs. Hunter received much attention from him, and she continued so ill that Mara did not leave her. Bodine became convinced that a chance to speak with Mara in private might not be obtained very speedily, and therefore, with kindly consideration for her feelings, resolved to write that afternoon. He had nothing at hand better than pencil and note-book. He wrote:

"My dear Mara—You have so many sorrows and anxieties now that I cannot wait longer in my effort to relieve you of one of them. You should have been more frank with me; yet, so far from reproaching you, I only remember that you are the daughter of my dearest friend, and that you need me as protector and father rather than as lover. I appreciate your motive to sacrifice yourself for my sake. Perhaps you will remember that I have warned you against this noble impulse of self-sacrifice—a tendency, however, which may be carried much too far. You utterly misjudge me if you think I would consciously accept any such sacrifice on your part. As far as I am concerned you are free from any obligation whatever, except that of trusting me, and coming to me as Ella does, as nearly as you can. You need a stanch and faithful protector against yourself, and such will be Hugh Bodine."

Ella carried this missive into the little tent set apart for Mrs. Hunter. When Mara read the note she hid it in her bosom, and buried her face in her hands. Ella tried to soothe her, assuring her that she knew how it had all come about, and that it would make no difference in her love.

"Oh, Ella!" Mara sobbed, "my pride needed humbling, and I am overwhelmed in very truth. I thought I was superior to you, and that my course was so heroic. The result is I have wronged and made unhappy your father, the man I honor most in all the world. Oh, I feel now that it would have been better if I had been buried under the ruins."

"Mara," said Ella firmly, "this is a time when we must make the best of everything—when we should not waste our strength in grieving over what cannot be helped. Papa has explained everything to me, and you will only wound him further if you do not comply with his wishes. He is very resolute; and, in a matter of this kind, you could not move him a hair's-breadth. Please do just what he asks now, and let time make future duty clearer."

Bodine was not astray in thinking that his note would relieve Mara's mind. Sad and humiliated as she was, his words had taken her from a false position, and would enable her to give him the filial love and homage with which her heart overflowed. Even if Clancy escaped from his entanglement, which she much doubted, she felt that both should pay the penalty of their errors in long probation.

As the afternoon wore away Mrs. Willoughby and Mrs. Bodine took some much-needed rest. Clancy went down town to look after his own affairs. Mr. Houghton had a consultation with his confidential man of business, at which George was present. Then the young fellow busied himself in perfecting the camp appointments and securing more provisions.

Kern Watson and his family, Aun' Sheba and her husband, with old Tobe and a few friends and neighbors, knelt around the remains of little Vilet as Mr. Birdsall offered a prayer. Bodine, Ella, and George, with his two servants, were also present. Then the minister and a few others helped the stricken father to bury his child. After the brief service the captain told Ella that she must go and rest till he called her.

George ventured to walk back with the tearful girl and to say, "Miss Bodine, you seem to have a hand to help and a heart to feel with every one."

"I should be callous indeed," she replied, "if I did not grieve at the death of that little girl. She aided in my effort to earn a livelihood. I saw her daily, and no one could help becoming fond of her, she was so good, and gentle, and quiet. Her poor father—how I pity him! The mute anguish in his face was overpowering. He is the most quiet, but he grieves the most, and will never get over it."

"I think you are right, Miss Bodine. I don't believe your intuitions would often lead you astray."

"I am very matter-of-fact," Ella replied.

"If I admit that, I must also add that one would have to do his level best to furnish the kind of facts you would approve of."

"And I must also add, Mr. Houghton, that you are furnishing them in plenty. I can never try to thank you, for I shouldn't know where to begin, or when to leave off."

"Please leave off now. Oh, Miss Bodine! I am so grateful for your kindness to my father, and he is just as pleased as I am."

"Ah! I've at last caught you in a bit of selfishness,"

she said with a piquant smile. "You would keep the privilege of thanking people while denying it to me;" and she vanished before he could reply.

"Oh!" he groaned inwardly, "if any of these Southern fellows carry her off, I'm done for."

Miss Ainsley spent a very wretched afternoon. Clancy was away, Mrs. Willoughby worn out, and she was left chiefly to her own resources, which were meagre indeed under the circumstances. Instead of forgetting self in behalf of those less fortunate, she brooded over what she deemed neglect. Mr. Willoughby talked to her for a time after dinner, and then busied himself in helping others provide shelter against the coming night; loaning here and there some of the articles which he had brought from his home. Throughout the day multitudes had been making preparations to spend the night in the squares, vacant lots, and in spacious yards. Few had been so forehanded as George Houghton, who had the advantage of abundant means, and good, fearless help in his efforts. By this time, however, the square was well covered by almost every variety of hastily improvised shelters, and the rays of the late afternoon sun brought out rainbow hues, strange and picturesque effects, so diverse were the materials employed and the ingenuity in construction which had been exercised.

Clancy had been almost reckless in his disposition to enter buildings, a risk which few others would incur on that day. He returned after four o'clock with a large supply of provisions, which he believed might be difficult to obtain should the shocks continue with greater violence. So far from observing that he was pale from exhaustion, Miss Ainsley was inclined to be reproachful that he had remained away so long. He listened wearily for a time, then answered, "I did not think that I could be especially useful here. *Men*, like soldiers, *must* do what must be done. I have taken pains to learn in your behalf that telegraphic and railroad communication will soon be re-established, and I have arranged, as soon as a despatch can be sent, to have

one forwarded to your father's last address, assuring him that you are safe."

"My father is not at the place of his last address. If he is alive, he is trying to reach me, and he will not leave me till he has taken me utterly away from all this horror and danger. I hope you are ready to leave Charleston now."

"Leave my native city in its present plight! Why, Miss Ainsley, that would be almost like running away and leaving my mother."

"Are brick and mortar more to you than I am?"

"Bricks and mortar do not make Charleston, but the people with whom I have always lived. I will certainly take you to a place of safety, if your father cannot; but my duty is here. I would not only lose the respect of every one, but also my own self-respect, if I did not cast in my lot with this people until every vestige of ruin has disappeared."

"I'm sure I never wish to see the place again," she replied sullenly.

"It would be unjust for me to expect that you should feel as I do about it; but I am a citizen, and you yourself would eventually despise me were I not faithful to my obligations."

This method of putting the case silenced her for the time. She knew that he had ascribed to her a higher conception of duty than she possessed, and she believed that he was also aware of the fact. Since she had gone so far with him she now wished him to be a blind, unquestioning lover, wholly devoted and ready to fly with her at the first opportunity. The very qualities which they had mutually admired were now seen on their seamy side. Her cosmopolitan spirit which led her to sigh, "Anywhere so it be not Charleston," was now at war with his feeling of almost passionate commiseration for his stricken birthplace; while she in turn found his unyielding nature and keen perceptions which had afforded such pleasure in overcoming and meeting were now not at all to her wishes. She had yielded

to him as never before to any one, and was intensely chagrined that he was not wholly subservient to her. If he should not become so she could never think of him without humiliation. He had seen her undisguised in all her weakness. She had thrown herself into his arms and implored his protection almost as unreservedly as Mrs. Willoughby had clung to her husband. She had also left him when he was helpless, and again when he was ill and weak. What she required now, therefore, was a blind idolatry; and so many had offered this that she felt entitled to it, even though there should be no such devotion on her part. If, in any sense, he should be critic as well as lover, he could make her exceedingly uncomfortable; and she had a growing perception that he was comparing her with others, that there was a lack of warmth in his words and manner, which even the circumstances could not extenuate. She resolved, therefore, to teach him that she would tolerate nothing halfway in his conduct. She was sitting on a chair while he reclined at her feet, and she determined that he should be at her feet in a sense which had large meanings to her. So she rose and said coldly, "Mr. Clancy, you seem to have so many obligations that I scarcely know where I come in."

Then she went toward the awning, intending to withdraw herself from his society until he should become sufficiently humble. He rose in strong irritation, too weary even to be patient. At this instant the shock which occurred at 5.16 passed over the city. In a second all her purposes vanished; her abject terror returned, and she threw herself on his breast, and sobbing, buried her face on his shoulder. Mrs. Willoughby also fled to her husband. As Mrs. Hunter had seemed quieter Aun' Sheba had been watching in the place of Mara, who had sought a little rest beneath the awning. She now came hastily out, but Clancy would not encounter her eyes. Indeed, his false position overwhelmed him with increasing shame and confusion. He resolved in a sort of desperation to meet Miss Ainsley's requirements as far as possible until she was safe in her father's hands,

and then to become free. If he had known how Mara's position enabled her to interpret his own he would have been more resigned.

The shock which occurred so late in the day was a sad preparation for the night, to which all looked forward with unspeakable dread. Such little confidence or cheerfulness as had been maintained was dissipated; weariness and deferred relief increased the general dejection; only the bravest could maintain their fortitude.

Mrs. Bodine's courage was due to a faith and a temperament which did not fail her. The veteran remained quiet and steady, with soldier-like endurance, but Ella was becoming exhausted. She had had very little sleep for a long time, and had passed through strong excitement. Indeed, all her powers had been taxed severely. While she had more physical and moral courage than most girls of her age possess, she, like the great majority, suffered much from fear at the recurrence of the shocks. As night came on she yielded to the general depression.

Aun' Sheba also had almost reached the limits of her powers, a fact she could not help showing as she set about preparations for supper. George instantly noted this. He had secured some rest the night before, and possessed great capabilities of endurance combined with an unusually fearless spirit. He also believed that this was his hour and opportunity, and that he could do more to win Ella's favor that night by brave cheerful effort than by any amount of love-making afterward. He little dreamed how completely won she was already. Her plan of receiving his "addresses" indefinitely had already lost its charms. She now simply longed to lean her weary head upon his shoulder and be petted and comforted a little. Unaware that the citadel could be had at any time for the asking, George began his sapping and mining operations with great vigor. He made Aun' Sheba sit down and give directions for supper, which he and his two colored men carried out. Mrs. Bodine was the only one who would jest with him, and he had a word

of banter with her; and a cheery word for every one as occasion permitted.

"Bravo, George!" said Dr. Devoe, as they at last sat down to supper. "We vote you the Mark Tapley of this occasion. I'm so used up that I've only energy enough to drink a cup of coffee."

Ella was about to wait on Mr. Haughton as before, but George intercepted her, saying, "You are too tired."

"I would rather," she urged with downcast eyes. She bore the tray to the invalid, who looked at her very kindly, as he said, "You are worn out, my dear."

"Please don't speak that way," she faltered. "I'm just that silly and tired that I can't stand anything."

"You brave, noble girl! What haven't you stood and endured for the last few hours and weeks! I have a very guilty conscience, Miss Bodine, and you only can absolve me."

"No one must be kind to me to-night, or I shall break down utterly;" and dashing a tear away, she hastily withdrew.

George heaped her plate; but when he saw that she would touch nothing but her coffee, he looked at her with such deep solicitude in his face that she sprang up and fled to the sheltering awning, leaving him perplexed and troubled indeed. All were too well bred to make any remark upon this little side scene. At her post of observation by the fire, and although her eyes were full of tears, tributes to little Vilet, Aun' Sheba shook for a moment with suppressed laughter. Motherly Mrs. Bodine soon followed Ella, and taking her in her arms, said soothingly, "There, now, child, have a good cry, and you'll feel better. I wish to the Lord, though, that all the world had as little to cry about as you, my dear."

"That's what provokes me so, cousin. It's so silly and weak."

"Oh, well, Ella, you're done beat out, as Aun' Sheba says; and that's the only trouble—that and the blindness

of yonder great boy, who expects to court you for months before venturing to stammer some incoherent nonsense. Now, a Southern man—"

"Cousin Sophy, I won't listen to such words," said Ella, the hot blood coming into her pale face. "He isn't a great boy; he's the bravest man I ever heard of. Now, when every one is giving out, he is only the braver and stronger. If he is absurd enough to be afraid of me— Well, you are the last one to speak so."

"There, there, child; this is my way of feeling your pulse and giving a little tonic," said Mrs. Bodine, laughing. "You have indications of strong vitality, as the doctor would say. Bless the big Vandal! If I were a girl, I'd set my cap at him myself."

"Oh, Cousin Sophy! Aren't you ashamed to work me up so? Well, that is the last glimmer of spunk that I can show to-night."

"If I could only manage to give him a hint of your weak and defenceless condition—"

"Cousin Sophy, if you do anything of the kind—" and she almost sprang to her feet.

The old lady pulled her back, stopped her mouth with kisses, as she said, "I won't tease you any more to-night." In a few moments she had soothed the girl to sleep.

George and Clancy now took full charge of the camp; for the members of their party, both white and black, were so exhausted and depressed as to be unequal to much exertion. Clancy seemed possessed by a sort of feverish restlessness. If he had been soothed and quieted when he returned in the afternoon, he would have passed the danger point unharmed; but his jaded body and mind had been stung into renewed action, and now he was fast losing the power to rest. Outraged Nature was beginning to take her revenge, but no one except Bodine observed the fact. Again putting self under his feet, he took Clancy aside, and said, "Pardon an old soldier, but experience in the field has taught me when a man must stop. Dr. Devoe is exhausted

and asleep, or I would send him to you. So take honest advice from me. If you don't quiet your nerves and sleep, you'll have trouble."

Clancy, in grateful surprise, thanked him warmly, and said he would rest later on. His hope was that Miss Ainsley would retire, for in his present condition he felt that her voluble expressions of fear and general dissatisfaction would be intolerable. At this juncture some one came and said that a friend of his in another part of the square was ill and wished to see him. He explained and excused himself to Miss Ainsley, who replied only by a cold, reproachful glance.

The light of day faded; the stars shone calmly above the strange scene, where lamps and candles flickered dim and pale, like the hopes of those who had lighted them. The murmur of conversation was lost in the loud singing of hymns, prayers and exhortations on the part of the negroes.

Mr. Birdsall had gathered many of his flock about him, and was conducting a religious service in a fairly orderly manner. Both he and his people yielded somewhat to the intense excitement of the occasion, but it was his intention that the religious exercises should cease at a reasonable hour.

Kern, Sissy, and Aun' Sheba were sitting silently near him, and at last the minister said, "Bruder Watson, you an' your wife will feel bettah if you express you'se feelin's, an' sing a while. I reckon, if I say you an' you' wife will sing, they will be mo' quiet."

Kern assented to anything like a call of duty, and Mr. Birdsall resumed, "Fren's, in closin' de meetin' fer dis ebenin', Bruder an' Sista Watson will sing a hymn togeder; an' we, respectin' dere berebement, will listen. Dey have been greatly offlicted, for de Lawd has taken from dem de lam' of dere bosoms. I 'ask you all now to listen to de expression of dere faith in dis night ob sorrow. Den we mus' remembah dat de sick an' weak are in dis squar, and gib dem a chance to res'."

Kern lifted up his magnificent voice, charged with the pent-up feeling of his heart, and his wife joined him with her rich, powerful contralto.

"On Jordan's banks we stan',
An Jordan's stream roll by;
No bridge de watahs span,
De flood am risin high.
Heah it foam an' roar, de dark flood tide,
How shel we cross to de oder side?

"De riber deep an strong,
De wabes am bery cole;
We see it rush along,
But who can venture bole?
Heah it foam an' roar, etc.

"A little chile step down;
It go in de riber deep.
Kin little feet touch groun'
Whar mountain billows sweep?
Heah dem foam an roar, etc.

"Dere comes a flash ob light,
Ober de cole dark wabes;
Dere come de angels' flight—
See shinin' hans dat sabe,
From de watah's foam, de dark flood tide,
Fer de Lawd hab seen from de oder side.

"Heah music swellin gran';
Yes, songs of welcome ring,
White wings de riber span
De little chile to bring.
Den let ole Jordan roar, de dark flood tide;
We'se borne across to de oder side."

The melodious duet rose and fell in great waves of sound, silencing all other voices. Contrary to Mr. Birdsall's expectations, religious fervor was only increased, and hoping to control it he asked Kern and Sissy to lead in several familiar hymns. The negroes throughout the square promptly responded, while not a few white refugees joined their voices to the mighty diapason of sound, which often swelled into grand harmonies.

Kern soon afterward went on duty for the night; Mr. Birdsall confined himself to quiet ministrations to his own people, and the leadership of the religious exercises fell into less judicious hands.

CHAPTER XLVII

LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF A NIGHT

AUN' SHEBA, with a devotion which quite equalled that to her own offspring, returned to Mara with the intention of watching Mrs. Hunter while the girl slept. She found Mrs. Bodine sitting with Mara, but the old colored woman was received with a warmth of welcome and sympathy which put her at ease at once. Mrs. Hunter had sunk into a kind of stupor rendering her unconscious of what was passing, and therefore they conversed in low tones.

"I reckon we need have no secrets from Aun' Sheba," said Mrs. Bodine.

"No," answered Mara, taking her old mammy's hand. "If ever a motherless girl had a true friend I have one in Aun' Sheba."

"Yes, honey, you'se right dar, an' I hopes you git right on some oder tings. I put a spoke in de hon'ble business an' I'se ready to put mo' in." She then briefly related her interview with Clancy and concluded, "Missy Mara, fo' de Lawd, wot kin you do but mar'y Marse Clancy arter wot happen wen he come fer you an' ole missus?"

Mara made no reply, but sat with her face buried in her hands.

"Aun' Sheba, this matter is all settled and settled honorably, too, as far as it can be. Captain Bodine has released Mara in words of the utmost kindness."

"Well, now, he *am* quality!" ejaculated Aun' Sheba in hearty appreciation.

"But," sobbed Mara, "it just breaks my heart—"

"No, honey lam', it won' break you heart, nor his nuther. Doin' what's right an' nat'ral an 'cordin to de Lawd doan break no hearts. It's de oder ting wot dus in de long run, an' mar'in' gen'ly means a long run. You'd hab ter begin by lyin' 'miscuously, as I tole Marse Clancy, an no good ud come ob dat."

"Well, it is all settled as far as Mara is concerned," said Mrs. Bodine, with a little laugh, "and there need be no 'miscuous lying. How Mr. Clancy will get out of his scrape remains to be seen."

"Well, I tells you how he git out. I'se keep an eye on dat limpsey-slimpsey runaway as well as on de pots an kittles, an she's gwine ter run away agin from dis yere town jes as soon as de way open. Dat'll be de las you see ob her."

"She's had a hard time of it, poor thing," said Mrs. Bodine, charitably, "and we can't expect her to feel about Charleston as we do. The question is, will Mr. Clancy feel obliged to follow her eventually?"

"I tink he's 'bliged not ter."

"Well, Aun' Sheba, I'm glad you have such strong religious ideas of marriage."

"I'se feerd I ain't bery 'ligious 'bout anyting. I put myself on 'bation while ago, but I kin'er forgits 'bout dat 'bation, I hab so much to tink ob."

Mrs. Bodine began to laugh as she said, "I thought you were a sensible woman, Aun' Sheba."

"Yes, I know. I did tole Marse Clancy dat I hab hoss-sense."

"Then you were lying 'miscuously."

"How dat, missus?"

"Why, Aun' Sheba, do you think you have been hiding your light under a bushel basket all this time? Old Hannah—poor old Hannah! I wonder what has become of her—she and Mara have told me how you do for the sick and poor. Don't you know that the Bible says, 'Inasmuch as

ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me'? You've sent me nice things more than once. I'm 'one of the least of these.' You don't do these things to be seen of men."

"No, nor I doesn't do it kase I specs ter git anoder string to my harp bime-by. I does it kase I'se kin'er sorry fer de po' critters."

"Exactly. That is why He fed the hungry and healed the sick. He was sorry for them. Come, Aun' Sheba, don't be foolish any more."

"I feels it kin'er sumptious ter be so shuah."

"Now, Aun' Sheba, you *are* doing wrong," said Mrs. Bodine, gravely and earnestly. "The Lord has been very patient with you—more so than I would be. If I had made you promises and you kept saying, 'I don't feel sure about them,' I'd give you a piece of my mind."

"Lor, missus, how you puts it! Is it dataway?"

"Certainly."

"Well, den, I jes takes myse'f off 'bation. I'se gwine ter hang onter de promises. Lawd, Lawd, missus, I s'posed I'd hab ter groan so dey heah me all ober de square fo' I could be 'ligious."

"Oh, dear, hear it now! Such groaning makes every one else groan. The voice that God hears is the wish of the heart and not a hullabaloo. How shall we get through the night if this keeps up? If you'll help me to my quarters I'll try to get what rest I can."

When Aun' Sheba returned, Mara insisted on her lying down till she was called. "I shall do something in this time of trouble except make trouble," said the girl resolutely, and she would take no denial.

Clancy found that his friend needed much attention, which he gave until warned by his own symptoms that he must see a physician. He found George lying on a blanket by a small fire, and that all the others were either sleeping or resting. "I declare I hate to waken Dr. Devoe," he said, "but I feel as if I were going to be ill."

George felt the hand of his friend, and sprang up, saying, "I'll waken Dr. Devoe with or without your leave."

After a brief examination the physician said:

"Why did you not come to me before?"

Clancy explained that he had been caring for a sick friend, to which the doctor replied testily:

"I don't believe he was half so ill as you are. Well, you must obey me now as long as you are rational, and I fear that won't be very long." And he promptly placed Clancy under the open part of the awning, which was the sleeping-room for the men by night, and general living-room by day. Having given his patient a remedy, he returned and said, "Here you are, too, Houghton, up and around. Do you wish to break down also?"

"You forget, doctor, that I had some sleep last night. Feel my pulse."

"Slightly febrile, but then I know what's the matter with *you*. If I were not so old and bald-headed I'd cut out a slow coach like you. I'm half a mind to try it as it is."

"Go ahead, doctor. You'll be only one more. How many are there now, do you suppose?"

"I know how many there should be after what I've seen. But bah! you Northern young chaps lay siege to a girl at such long range that she surrenders to some other fellow before you find it out."

"Would you have me call her now, shake her awake, and propose?" asked George, irritably.

"No, I'd have you fight shy and give me a chance. There, you are too far gone for a jest. What are you up for?"

"Because I'm not sleepy, for one thing, and I think some one should be on guard. What's more, I don't like the way those negroes are performing. They seem to be going wild."

"Yes, and they are doing a lot of harm to the sick and feeble. If they don't stop at midnight I'll find out whether there's any law in this city. I say, Houghton, since you are going to sit up, give Clancy this medicine every half hour,

and call me at twelve." He then wrapped himself in a blanket and was asleep in a minute.

If George had been wide awake before, the doctor's raillery so increased his impatience and worry that for a time he paced up and down before the fire. Was he faint-hearted in wooing Ella? Suppose some bold Southerner should forestall him? The thought was torture; yet it seemed ungenerous and unkind to seek her openly while she was in a sense his guest and dependent upon him. "Well," he growled at last, "I won't do it. When she first spoke to me she said I was a gentleman, and I'll be hanged if I don't remain one and take my chances."

He threw himself down again by the fire with his back to the awning. Before very long he heard a light step. Turning hastily he saw Ella's startled face by the light of the fire.

"Oh, Mr. Houghton! is it you? Pardon me for disturbing you," and she was about to retreat.

He was on his feet instantly and said, "You will only disturb me by going away, that is—I mean if you are not tired and sleepy."

"There is such a dreadful noise I can't sleep any more," she replied, hesitating a moment.

"Suppose—you might help me watch a little while then," he stammered.

"I'll watch if you will rest."

"Certainly;" and he brought her a chair and then reclined near her feet.

"But I meant that you should sleep."

"I only promised to rest."

"But you need sleep if any one does. I've had a good nap and feel much better. How late is it?"

"Nearly eleven, and time for Clancy's medicine." When he returned he told her about Clancy.

"Poor fellow!" she said, sympathetically.

"Clancy seems to have trouble on his mind. We all have enough, but he more than his share."

"I should think you would be worried out of your senses with so many people to think about and care for. No wonder you can't sleep."

"Thoughts of *people* do not keep me awake, and I am glad to say my father's resting quietly. He and your father are born soldiers."

"Your father's to blame for my making a fool of myself at the supper-table. He spoke so kindly and sympathetically, and I was so tired and silly that I couldn't stand anything. Then you looked reproachfully at me because I couldn't eat all you sent—enough to make Uncle Sheba ill."

"Now, Miss Bodine, I didn't look at you reproachfully."

"Who's that snoring over there?"

"Dr. Devoe. My facial muscles must have been shaken out of shape to have given you so false an impression. Anyhow, I seem to have driven you away, and I've been miserable ever since."

"Why, Mr. Houghton! The idea of letting a tired girl's weakness disturb you! You will soon be as ill as Mr. Clancy."

"I'm only stating a fact."

"Well, facts are very queer nowadays. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised at anything."

"Yet you are a continual surprise to me, Miss Bodine. Do you think I've forgotten anything since you carried Mrs. Bodine out of her tottering house?"

"Oh, Mr. Houghton! my memory goes further back than that. I can see a tall man leap into a sinking boat and—and—oh, why did you sink with it? My father's agony over the thought that you had died for him turned his hair white."

"I couldn't help sinking, Miss Bodine. If it hadn't been for that blasted pole— Well, perhaps it saved all our lives, for my boat was overloaded as it was. But don't think about that affair. It might have turned out worse."

"It might indeed. If you knew how we all felt when we thought you were drowned!"

"Well, I thank God that I happened to be near."

"Happened! You seemed to have a presentiment of evil, and kept near."

"I was facing a certainty of evil then, Miss Bodine. I expected to go North in a few days, and feared I might not see you again. There, I shouldn't speak so now. My memory goes back further than yours. I remember a blue-eyed stranger who drew near to me when I was facing a street bully, as if she meditated becoming my protector. I saw a noble woman's soul in those clear eyes, and she said 'I was a gentleman.' I must remember her words now with might and main. All that I ask is that you won't let any one else—that you will give me a chance when in your own home. Your father has—"

"Mr. Houghton, is it not time for Mr. Clancy's medicine?"

"Yes, and past time," he replied, ruefully.

When he returned she said demurely, "I think I can promise what you ask. Now surely, since your mind is at rest, you can sleep. I will watch."

"I'm too happy to sleep."

"How absurd!"

"Oh, the shock this morning did not disturb me half so much as to see those fellows around with their devouring eyes."

"Mr. Houghton, don't you think that if we asked them, those colored people would be less loud? It must be dreadful for those who are sick, and there are so many."

"They will be brutal indeed if they don't yield to you," and he led the way to the nearest centre of disturbance.

"Oh, see! Mr. Houghton, there's our old Hannah."

He saw an old woman swaying back and forth, her lips moving spasmodically, but uttering no sound. The crowd watched her in a sort of breathless suspense. Suddenly she burst out with the hymn, "Oh, Raslin' Jacob! let me go," and the throng joined in the mighty refrain. The women swayed to and fro violently, all going together in a sort

of rhythmic motion, meantime clapping their hands in an ecstasy of emotion. A man dropped to the earth "converted." He yelled rather than prayed for mercy, then suddenly swooned and became rigid as a corpse. Others, both men and women, were prostrated also; and to bring as many as possible into this helpless condition appeared to be the general object as far as any purpose was manifested. The crowd seemed to regard poor, demented Hannah as inspired, for a space was kept clear before her. When she began to sway in her weird fashion, and her face to twitch, she was the priestess and the oracle. The hymn she began was taken up first by two self-appointed exhorters, then by all.

"Oh, Hannah!" cried Ella, when her voice could be heard, "do stop and come away. You are harming the sick and the injured."

The old woman started, and on seeing the girl rushed forward, crying, "Down on you knees. Now you chance. Pray, bruders, pray, sistahs. De quakes neber stop till a white man or woman converted—converted till dere proud heads in de bery dus' "—and she sought to force Ella on her knees.

In a moment Ella was surrounded by the worshippers, whose groans, shouts, prayers and ejaculations created Pandemonium. The girl was terrified, but George encircled her with his arm, and thundered, "Give way. I'll brain the first man who stops us."

Awed for an instant they yielded to George's vigorous push out and away, and then returned to their former wild indulgence of religious frenzy.

For several paces after their escape he seemed to forget that his arm was still around Ella, nor did she remind him. Suddenly he removed it, saying, "Pardon me, Miss Bodine, I am that enraged with those lunatics that I'd like to give them something to howl about."

"Please be calm, Mr. Houghton," said Ella gently. "I'm not afraid now, and should not have been afraid at all. I

know these people better than you do. They wouldn't have harmed us, and I fear they don't know any better. It's only their looks, tones, and words that seem blasphemous, that are frightful. It was I who took you there and I should have known better."

"Oh, Ella!—beg pardon—Miss Bodine, what a savage a man would be if you couldn't manage him!"

"Then promise you won't go near those people any more."

"You are too brave a girl to ask that when you learn that Dr. Devoe is going to tackle them with the police if they don't quiet down by midnight."

They spoke in low tones as he again held her hand, while they picked their way among the extemporized shelters and uneasy refugees in the square. As they approached their own quarters she faltered, "I'm not very brave tonight, and I have long since learned that you are only too brave."

He paused, still retaining her hand as he said, "What a strange scene this is! How wild and unearthly those sounds now seem! How odd it all is—our homes yonder deserted and we here under the stars. It's stranger than any dream I ever had, yet if it were a dream I would not wish to wake with you—"

"Mr. Houghton, what's that, that, *that?*"

Far off in the southeast there were sounds like faint explosions which grew rapidly louder. Instinctively he drew her nearer, and saw her face grow white even in the faint radiance of the stars.

"Oh!" she gasped shuddering as the deep roar of the coming earthquake began. Then his arm drew her close, and she hid her face on his breast.

"Ella," he said solemnly, "I love you, God knows if these words were my last I would still say I love you."

The mighty roar gradually deepened, and with it blended the cry of thousands; the earth quivered and swayed, then the thunder passed on, accompanied by sounds like the distant crash of falling buildings.

George kissed the bowed head and whispered, "There, it's over and we are safe."

"Oh, thank God! you were with me!" she sobbed.

"May I not be with you always, Ella?"

"God grant it! Oh, George, George, I would have leaped after you into the water if they had not held me. How could I do without you now?"

"Come, my brave little wife, come with me to my father and reassure him."

"George," cried Mr. Houghton.

"We are here," he answered, drawing aside the screen.

"We?"

"Yes, Ella and I. That last shock has rather hastened matters."

"Ella, my dear child! Truly God is bringing good out of evil;" and he took the girl into his arms. Then he added, "You'll forgive me and be my own dear daughter?"

"Yes, Mr. Houghton. You'll find I am rich in love if nothing else."

"Ah! Ella dear, the world seems going to pieces, and my wealth with it, but love only grows more real and more precious."

"My father's calling me;" and kissing him a hasty good-by she vanished.

Miss Ainsley again ran shrieking out, calling upon Clancy, but Dr. Devoe met her and drew her away from his muttering, half-conscious patient. When she became sufficiently quiet he told her that Clancy was dangerously ill, and that nothing must be said or done to excite him. This seemed to her only another proof of general disaster, and, in almost abject tones, she begged, "Oh, doctor, make me sleep till—my father will surely come to-morrow, and then I can get away."

Her entreaty was so loud that even Mara could not help hearing her. The physician rather contemptuously thought that it would be better for all if she were quiet, and gave

the anodyne. So far from feeling sympathy for Clancy she was almost vindictive toward him for having failed her.

Fear, uncontrolled, becomes one of the most debasing of the emotions. It can lead to panic even among soldiers with arms in their hands; sailors will trample on women and children in their blind rush for the boats; men will even deny their convictions, their faith, and cringe to brutal power; crimes the most vile are committed from fear, and fear had virtually obliterated womanhood in Miss Ainsley's soul. She was in a mood to accept any conditions for the assurance of safety, and she gave not a thought to any one or anything that offered no help. With the roar of the earthquake still in her ears, and in the dark midnight she knew there was no help, no way of escape, and so with the impulse of the shipwrecked who break into the spirit room she besought the opiate which could at least bring oblivion. Her eyes, which could be so beautiful, had the wild, hunted look of an animal, and her form, usually grace itself, writhed into distortions. Her demoralization under the long-continued terror was complete, and all were glad when she became unconscious and could be hidden from sight. As Aun' Sheba made her way to her own household she grunted, "A lun'tic out ob a 'sylem wouldn' mar'y dat gal if he seed wot I seed."

CHAPTER XLVIII

GOOD BROUGHT OUT OF EVIL

THERE were brave spirits and Heaven-sustained souls in the little camp which falls under our immediate observation; and outward calm was soon restored, yet it was long before any one could sleep again. Although she had trembled like a leaf, Mara had not left her watch by Mrs. Hunter, nor had Aun' Sheba till some moments after the shock. Then Mrs. Bodine joined the girl with soothing and reassuring words. She did not tell Mara, however, of Clancy's illness, feeling that no additional burden should be imposed until it was necessary. Mr. and Mrs. Willoughby sat together by the fire; so also did Ella, with her head upon her father's breast, as she told of the great joy which robbed the night of so much of its terror. Old Tobe, with Sam and Jube, crouched on the opposite side of the low, flickering blaze, which lighted up in odd effect the white wool and wrinkled visage of the aged negro. In some respects he and Mr. Houghton were alike. The scenes they were passing through toned down their fiery domineering spirits into resignation and fortitude.

George was restless, strong and inspired rather than awed by the recent events. He knew that Ella's eyes followed him as he came and went from his father's bedside, waited on Clancy, and made himself useful in other ways. A man would be craven indeed who could not be brave under such circumstances.

Beyond his camp, scenes impossible to describe were taking place. White clergymen were going from group to

group, and from shelter to shelter, speaking words of cheer and hope. Physicians were busy among those who needed physical aid; husbands soothing wives, and parents their sobbing children.

On the edge of the square near the street the groans and cries of a woman began to draw the restless people who always run to any point of disturbance.

"George," shouted Dr. Devoe. The young man responded promptly. "Keep this crowd away—the vulgar wretches!"

A woman of refinement and wealth, who with her husband had clung to their adjacent home until the last shock occurred, was in the throes of childbirth.

No one could stand a moment before the young man's words and aspect, and in a few moments he secured all the privacy possible.

Eventually he bore the almost swooning mother to the inner room under the awning, where a bed had been made for her, while Mrs. Bodine and Mrs. Willoughby cared for the child. The husband was so prostrated by anxiety for his wife as to be almost helpless himself.

Among a certain class of the negroes, to religious excitement was added the wild terror of the earthquake, and they were simply becoming frantic in their actions and expressions. George, Dr. Devoe, Mr. Willoughby and some others went to the large group of which old Hannah and two great burly exhorters were the inspiration. They commanded and implored them to be more quiet, but received only insolent replies.

"We'se savin' de city which de wickedness ob you white folks is 'stroyin'," one of the shepherds shouted; "an' we'se gwine to cry loud and mighty till mawnin'."

At this moment, George espied Uncle Sheba, who certainly appeared, in the general craze, to have a sense of his besetting sin; for he was yelling at the top of his lungs, "I'se gwine ter wuck in de mawnin'."

Suddenly there burst through the crowd an apparition

before which he quailed; his jaw dropped and his howl degenerated into a groan. Aun' Sheba had heard and recognized his voice, and she went through the throng like a puffing tug through driftwood. "Mister Buggone," she said, with the sternness of fate, "ef yer doan stop yer noise you'se 'lowance stop heah and now. Yer'll hab ter wuck shuah or starbe, fer if yer doan come wid me now yer neber come agin."

Uncle Sheba went away with her, meek as a lamb.

The others were too frenzied even to notice this little scene. George, Mr. Willoughby, and some others were with difficulty restrained by the cooler Dr. Devoe. "Go with me to the station-house," he said. "In behalf of my patients I will demand that this nuisance be abated."

The officer on duty returned with them, backed by a resolute body of men. The two exhorters were told to take their choice between silence and the station-house. There is usually a good deal of selfish method in such leaders' madness, and they sullenly retired. Poor, demented Hannah was bundled away, and comparative quiet restored through the square.

The weary hours dragged on; the uneasy earth caused no further alarms that night. At last the dawn was again greeted with thankfulness beyond words.

There was no paper that morning, for compositors and pressmen could not be induced to work, and at first there was a feeling of great uncertainty and depression.

Mrs. Bodine's spirit was again like a cork on the surface. At breakfast she remarked, "We had an awful time last night, but here we are still alive, and able to take some nourishment. I expect the Northern papers will say that this wicked and rebellious old city is getting its deserts; but we shall soon have help and cheer from our Southern friends."

"I think you will find yourself mistaken, Mrs. Bodine, about the North," said George.

"Oh, you!" cried the old lady, laughing, "you look at

the South through a pair of blue eyes. I reckon we shall have to send you and Ella North as missionaries."

George in his pride and happiness could not keep his secret, and had been congratulated with honest heartiness. He therefore responded gayly, "When I take Ella North even earthquakes won't keep young fellows from coming here to see if any more like her are left."

Again Ella remarked, nodding significantly, "Time will cure him, Cousin Sophy."

Nevertheless the illness of Mrs. Hunter and Clancy, and the precarious condition of the young mother, cast a gloom over the little party. Clancy's pulse indicated great exhaustion, and he only recognized people when he was spoken to. Dr. Devoe prohibited any one from going near him except himself and George. Miss Ainsley uttered no protest at this. She truly felt that after the events of the night all was over between them. In a sort of sullen shame she said little and longed only for the hour which would bring her father and escape.

Mr. Ainsley arrived during the morning, and George entertained him hospitably. His daughter clung to him, imploring him to take her away at the first possible moment. He was much distressed at Clancy's condition, and offered to take him North also; but Dr. Devoe said authoritatively, "He is too ill to be moved or even spoken to." Mrs. Willoughby and her husband were determined that Miss Ainsley should not give her father a false impression, and spoke freely of Clancy's great exertions. "Yes," added Dr. Devoe, "I feel guilty myself. He should have been taken in hand yesterday afternoon and compelled to be quiet in mind and body, but I had so many to look after, and he seemed the embodiment of energy and fearlessness. Well, it's too late now, and we must do the best we can for him."

That day Mr. Ainsley and his daughter left the city. She gave vivid descriptions of the catastrophe at the North, but her friends remarked upon her fine reserve and modesty in speaking of her personal experiences. Her faultless

veneer was soon restored, and we suppose she is pursuing her career of getting the most and best out of life after a fashion which has too many imitators.

Poor Mara's name was significant of her experience of that day and others which followed. In the morning she learned of Clancy's illness, and it was eventually found that her voice and touch had a soothing effect possessed by no other.

We have followed our characters through the climax of their experiences, and need only to suggest what further happened. They, with others, realized more fully the conditions of their lot and the extent of the disaster.

With an ever-increasing courage and fortitude the people faced the situation, and resolved to build anew the fortunes of their city. Communication with the outside world permitted messages of sympathy and far more. In the Sunday morning issue of the "News and Courier" the following significant editorial appeared: "There is no break in the broad line of brotherly love throughout the United States. All hearts in this mighty country throb in unison. In the North as in the South, in the West as in the East, there is a sincere sorrow at the calamity which has befallen Charleston, and there is shining evidence of a beneficent desire to give the suffering people the assistance of both act and word."

Boston, the former headquarters of the abolitionists, and the veterans of the Grand Army vied with Southern cities and ex-Confederates in a spontaneous outpouring of sympathy and help. The hearts of a proud people were at last subdued, but it was by hands stretched out in fraternal love and not to strike.

In the city squares and other places of refuge there still continued sad and awful experiences, one of which was graphically described by the city editor of the journal already quoted.

At nearly midnight on Friday there had been a cessation in the shocks for about twenty-four hours, and the people

were resting quietly. Then came a convulsion second only in severity to the first one which had wrought such widespread ruin. "It had scarcely died away," to quote from the account referred to, "before there rose through the still night air in the direction of the public squares and parks the now familiar but still terrible cries of thousands of wailing voices, united in one vast chorus, expressive only of the utmost human misery. For a while this sound was heard above all other sounds, suggesting vividly to the mind what has been told by survivors of the scene that follows the sinking of a great ship at sea, when its living freight is left struggling with the waves; and this impression was heightened to the distant auditor by the gradual diminution in the volume of the cries, as though voice after voice were being silenced, as life after life were quenched beneath the tossing waves."

Dr. Devoe advised Mr. Houghton to leave the city, but he said, "No, I shall remain with my children; I shall share in the fortunes of the city which is henceforth to be my home."

Mrs. Hunter did not long survive, but she became quiet and rational before her end. To Mara's imploring words she replied calmly, "No, my time is near; and I feel that it is best. I belong to the old order of things, and have lingered too long already. I may have been mistaken in my feelings, and wrong in my enmities, but I had great provocation. Now I forgive as I hope to be forgiven. God grant, dear child, that you may have brighter days."

A sad little company followed her to the cemetery, and as they laid her to rest, they also spread over her memory the mantle of a broad, loving charity.

For a time it seemed as if brighter days could never come to Mara, for Clancy's life flickered like the light of an expiring candle. At last the fever broke and he became rational, the pure, open air conducing to his recovery. He was very weak and his convalescence was slow, measuring the mental and physical strain through which he had passed. Never had a poor mortal more faithful watchers, never was

life wooed back from the dark shore by more devoted love. "Live, live," was ever the language of Mara's eyes, and happiness gave him the power to live.

Captain Bodine carried out both the letter and spirit of his note. While he was very gentle, he was also very firm with Mara, expressing only paternal affection and also exerting paternal authority. At proper times he told her to go and rest in tones which she obeyed.

One day when Clancy was able to sit up a little, he took her aside and said, "Mara, you and Mr. Clancy are in one sense comparatively alone in the world, although you have many stanch friends. His health, almost his life, requires the faithful, watchful care which you can best give, and which you are entitled to give. It is his wish and mine, also Cousin Sophy's, that you should be married at once."

Again she gave him that luminous look which he so well remembered—an expression so full of homage, affection and sympathy that for the first time tears came into his eyes. "There, my child," he said, "you have repaid me, you have compensated me for everything. There is no need of words"—and he turned hastily away.

When the sun was near the horizon Mara was married, not in old St. Michael's, as her mother had been, but in the large tent which of late had sheltered her lover. Her pastor employed the old sacred words to which her mother had responded; and Captain Bodine, with the impress of calm, victorious manhood on his brow, gave her away in the presence of the little group of those who knew her best and loved her most. We may well believe from that time forth her gentleness and happiness would change the meaning of her name.

At last all ventured back to their homes. Mr. Houghton was so averse to parting with Ella that he equalled George in his impatience for the marriage. Aun' Sheba, who supervised preparations for the wedding breakfast, declared, "It am jes jolly ter see old Marse Houghton. As fer Missus Bodine, it pears as if she'd go off de han'l."

Then father and son took the blue-eyed bride to the North on a visit, in what George characterized as a "sort of triumphal procession."

The cabins of Aun' Sheba and Kern Watson were restored to a condition better than their former state, but Uncle Sheba discovered that the good old times of his wife's easy tolerance were gone. She put the case plainly, "Mr. Buggone, de Bible says dat dem dat doesn't wuck mus'n't eat, an' I'se gwine ter stick ter de Bible troo tick an' tin. You'se able to wuck as I be, an' you'se 'lowance now 'pends on you'se wuck."

We have already seen that Uncle Sheba was one of those philosophers who always submit to the inevitable.

Late one September night the moonbeams shone under the moss-draped branches of a live oak in a cemetery. They brought out in snowy whiteness a small headstone on which were engraved the words, "Yes, Vilet." Sitting by the grave and leaning his head against the stone was Kern Watson, but his calm, strong face was turned heavenward where his little girl waited for him "shuah."

THE END